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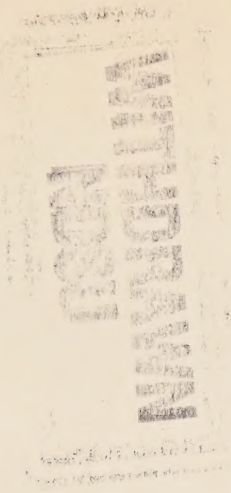

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THE CAMBRIDGE BIBLE
FOR SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

THE BOOK OF

PSALMS

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THE BOOK OF

PSALMS

Edited by

A. F. KIRKPATRICK, D.D.
Dean of Ely

CAMBRIDGE:
at the University Press
1927

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In the Psalms the soul turns inward on itself, and their great feature is that they are the expression of a large spiritual experience. They come straight from "the heart within the heart," and the secret depths of the spirit. Where, in those rough cruel days, did they come from, those piercing, lightning-like gleams of strange spiritual truth, those magnificent outlooks over the kingdom of God, those raptures at His presence and His glory, those wonderful disclosures of self-knowledge, those pure outpourings of the love of God? Surely here is something more than the mere working of the mind of man. Surely they tell of higher guiding, prepared for all time; surely, as we believe, they hear "the word behind them saying, This is the way, walk ye in it," they repeat the whispers of the Spirit of God, they reflect the very light of the Eternal Wisdom. In that wild time there must have been men sheltered and hidden amid the tumult round them, humble and faithful and true, to whom the Holy Ghost could open by degrees the "wondrous things of His law," whom He taught, and whose mouths He opened, to teach their brethren by their own experience, and to do each their part in the great preparation.

DEAN CHURCH.

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PREFACE

BY THE

GENERAL EDITOR FOR THE OLD TESTAMENT.

THE present General Editor for the Old Testament in the Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges desires to say that, in accordance with the policy of his predecessor the Bishop of Worcester, he does not hold himself responsible for the particular interpretations adopted or for the opinions expressed by the editors of the several Books, nor has he endeavoured to bring them into agreement with one another. It is inevitable that there should be differences of opinion in regard to many questions of criticism and interpretation, and it seems best that these differences should find free expression in different volumes. He has endeavoured to secure, as far as possible, that the general scope and character of the series should be observed, and that views which have a reasonable claim to consideration should not be ignored, but he has felt it best that the final responsibility should, in general, rest with the individual contributors.

A. F. KIRKPATRICK.

The choice and flower of all things profitable in other books the Psalms do both more briefly contain, and more movingly also express, by reason of that poetical form wherewith they are written . . . What is there necessary for man to know which the Psalms are not able to teach? They are to beginners an easy and familiar introduction, a mighty augmentation of all virtue and knowledge in such as are entered before, a strong confirmation to the most perfect among others. Heroical magnanimity, exquisite justice, grave moderation, exact wisdom, repentance unfeigned, unwearied patience, the mysteries of God, the sufferings of Christ, the terrors of wrath, the comforts of grace, the works of Providence over this world, and the promised joys of that world which is to come, all good necessarily to be either known or done or had, this one celestial fountain yieldeth. Let there be any grief or disease incident into the soul of man, any wound or sickness named, for which there is not in this treasure-house a present comfortable remedy at all times ready to be found.

R. HOOKER.

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* The Text adopted in this Edition is that of Dr Scrivener's *Cambridge Paragraph Bible*. A few variations from the ordinary Text, chiefly in the spelling of certain words, and in the use of italics, will be noticed. For the principles adopted by Dr Scrivener as regards the printing of the Text see his Introduction to the *Paragraph Bible*, published by the Cambridge University Press.

INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

LYRIC poetry is the most ancient kind of poetry and Hebrew poetry is mainly lyric. Neither epic nor dramatic poetry flourished in ancient Israel. Some indeed of the historical Psalms may be said to have an epic colouring, but they belong to the class of didactic narrative: Job and the Song of Songs may be called in a sense dramatic, but they do not appear to have been intended for performance on the stage[1]. The only independent branch of poetry in Israel was gnomic or proverbial poetry, which in the hands of the 'Wise Men' attained to a rich development, and must have exercised an important influence on the education of the people.

The Old Testament is the religious history of Israel, and the poetry preserved in the Book of Psalms is, as might be expected, religious poetry. Secular poetry no doubt existed[2], but, with

[1] See however Driver, *Lit. of O.T.*[6], p. 442, for the view that the Song may have been designed to be acted, the different parts being personated by different characters," or represented by "the varied voice and gesture of a single reciter."

[2] Such as the drinking songs referred to in Amos vi. 5 (R.V.); Is. v. 12; harvest and vintage songs (*Is.* xvi. 10, 11; Jer. xlviii. 33): parables (Judg. ix. 8 ff.). Solomon's 'thousand and five songs' were probably on a secular character (1 Kings iv. 32). Poems like Exod. xv and Judg. v are essentially religious. The *Book of the Wars of Jehovah* (Num. xxi. 14), and the *Book of Jashar*, i.e. *the Upright* (Josh. x. 13; 2 Sam. i. 18), appear to have been collections of poems commemorating remarkable episodes of national history, and the characters and exploits of national heroes. In these no sharp line could be drawn between what was secular and what was religious.

the exception of a few fragments preserved in the historical books[1], it has not come down to us. The Psalter then is a collection of religious lyrics. Lyric poetry is defined as "that which directly expresses the individual emotions of the poet", and religious lyric poetry is the expression of those emotions and feelings as they are stirred by the thought of God and directed Godwards. This is the common characteristic of the Psalms in all their manifold variety. Some are directly addressed to God, as petition or thanksgiving or praise: some are the communings of the soul with God, expressing its faith, its hope, its love, its needs, its fears, its aspirations, its joys, its triumphs: some celebrate the 'marvellous works' of God in nature and in history: some reflect upon the perplexing problems of life and their relation to the divine government of the world: but God is as it were the sun around which all revolves, and His light and heat illuminate and animate the whole.

The Psalms stand in an intimate relation to the whole of the Old Testament. They are the inspired response of the human heart to God's revelation of Himself, in Law and History and Prophecy and Philosophy.

The Psalmists celebrate *the moral law* as the guide of human conduct; they welcome *the ordinances of worship* and rejoice in the privilege of access to the presence of God in the Temple, as the crowning joy of life.

History supplies its lessons of God's goodness and man's ingratitude, thrown into the easily remembered form of didactic poetry. The recollection of the past is a warning for the present, the support of faith in the hour of trial, the ground of comfort in times of calamity.

The Psalms are closely connected with *Prophecy*. The term 'prophesying' is applied to the expression of religious fervour in chant and hymn (1 Sam. x. 10 ff., xix. 20 ff., 1 Chr. xxv. 1—3); and David's chief musicians, Heman, Asaph, and Jeduthun, are called 'seers' (1 Chr. xxv. 5; 2 Chr. xxix. 30. xxxv. 15). Sacred poetry often rises to prophetic foresight, or speaks with pro-

[1] E.g. Gen. iv. 23, 24; Num. xxi. 17, 18, 27—30, Judg. xv. 16; 1 Sam. xviii. 7.

phetic authority[1], while prophecy often passes into lyric poetry[2]. The passion for truth and righteousness, and the unquenchable belief that Jehovah's moral government of the world is working, surely if slowly, towards a glorious consummation in the establishment of His universal sovereignty, animate and inspire

Psalmists not less than Prophets.

Several Psalms reflect the influence of the '*Wisdom*' or religious philosophy of Israel, both in its practical and in its speculative aspects. The moral lessons for every-day life collected in the Book of Proverbs, and the discussion of the problems of the world in Job and Ecclesiastes, find their echo in the poetry of the Psalter[3].

The importance of the Psalter for a just appreciation of the history of Israel is obvious. How meagre an idea of the higher religious life of Israel should we derive from the Historical Books apart from the Prophets: how imperfect still would be the picture drawn from the Historical Books and the Prophets without the warmth of colouring added to it by the Psalms. These alone give us a glimpse into the inner religion of the best spirits in the nation, and bear witness to the faith, the love, the devotion of pious souls, even under the limitations of the Old Covenant.

Hence it is essential to study the Psalms critically and historically, to endeavour to ascertain their original meaning, and to assign them to their proper place in the history and development of revelation; not only in order to give life and reality to the Psalms themselves, and to understand them better; but for the sake of the light which they throw upon the religious history of Israel, and the course of God's dealings with His people.

The inquiry is however one of extreme difficulty. The widest diversity of opinion prevails as to the date and authorship of the Psalms, and we must often be content to acknowledge that a Psalm cannot be assigned to a definite period, still less to a particular author, with any degree of certainty.

[1] See Ps. xii. 5; xlvi. 10; l. 4 ff.; lxxv. 2 ff.; lxxxi. 6 ff.; cx. 1.
[2] See e.g. Is. xii, xxv, xxvi; Nah. i. 2 ff.; Hab. iii.
[3] See especially Pss. xxxvii, xlix, lxxiii.

But after all, the critical and historical study of the Psalms is but a preliminary to the higher study of their spiritual meaning and their devotional use. The Psalter has been through all the centuries and will ever continue to be the one unique and inexhaustible treasury of devotion for the individual and for the Church. Through its guidance the soul learns to commune with God: it supplies the most fitting language for common worship.

To some it may seem almost a sacrilege to apply the methods of criticism to such a book. It may be disappointing to find that many Psalms once supposed to be David's must be relegated to a far later age; perplexing to find familiar renderings condemned, and long current interpretations abandoned.

But Holy Scripture conveys divine truth through the medium of human language, and it is our duty to investigate to the full the meaning and the force of that language. Criticism is not the enemy but the handmaid of devotion. As we learn to understand more of the original meaning of the Psalms for those who wrote and used them, we shall learn more of their true meaning for ourselves.

But that meaning is not limited to the 'original' sense, if by this is meant only that which the writers could recognise in their own words. Every true poet's words contain far more than he himself at the moment intends. And the words of these inspired poets were so shaped and moulded by the Holy Spirit that they might grow and expand with the growth of revelation, and "gather wealth in the course of ages." The Psalms belong indeed to the Old and not to the New Testament. They are the product of the Jewish and not of the Christian Church[1]. But "the Psalter in its spiritual fulness

[1] "It is true that not a little of the colouring of the Psalms is derived from the ritual and manners of the old dispensation, and has now become antiquated; but practical religion does not refuse those bonds of connexion with the past. The believing soul is never anxious to separate its own spiritual life from the spiritual life of the fathers. Rather does it cling with special affection to the links that unite it to the church of the Old Testament; and the forms which, in their literal sense, are now antiquated, become to us an additional group of figures in the rich poetic imagery of the Hebrew hymnal." Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, p. 191.

belongs to no special time"; and the old words are 'fulfilled' in Christ. The Christian Church may, may must, use them as they are illuminated by the light of the Gospel. And if the saying, "pectus est quod facit theologum[1]," is true of the study of the Bible generally, it is most true of the study of that book which has well been called "the Bible within the Bible," the very "heart of the Bible."

CHAPTER II.

THE POSITION, NAMES, NUMBERING, AND DIVISIONS OF THE PSALTER.

1. *The position of the Psalter in the Old Testament.* The Hebrew title of the Old Testament indicates the three great divisions, in which, from very early times[2], the Canonical Books were arranged by the Jewish Church:—*Law*, *Prophets*, *Writings*. The Book of Psalms belongs to the third of these divisions, the *Writings* or *Hagiographa*. But its position in the group has not always been the same[3]. In the MSS. of the German type, which our printed editions follow, the Psalms

[1] "It is the heart which makes the theologian."

[2] This triple division is recognised in the Prologue to Ecclesiasticus, written about B.C. 132 by the author's grandson, who translated the book from Hebrew into Greek. "Whereas many great things have been delivered unto us by means of (διά) the law and the prophets and the others that have followed after them . . . . . my grandfather Jesus, when he had diligently given himself to the reading of the law and the prophets and the other books of our fathers (τῶν ἄλλων πατρίων βιβλίων) . . . was drawn on also himself to write something pertaining to instruction and wisdom." And again, apologising for the imperfections of his version, he says: "For words spoken in Hebrew have not precisely the same force, when they are translated into another tongue: and not only this treatise, but even the law and the prophecies and the rest of the books (τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν βιβλίων) differ in no small degree when they are spoken in their own language." The clear distinction which is here drawn between the Canonical books and Ecclesiasticus, and the reference to the Greek Version of the O.T. as already in existence, should be carefully noticed. See further below, p. xlvi.

[3] See Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, ch. i; Rule, *Canon of the O.T.*, ch. xii.

stand first, followed by Proverbs and Job. That this was the ancient order is at least a probable inference from Luke xxiv. 44 where "the Psalms" stands by the side of "the Law" and "the Prophets" as the title of the Hagiographa in general[1].

The order of the books of the O.T. in our English Bibles is that which had come to be adopted in the Vulgate by the sixteenth century. It corresponds more nearly to the arrangement of the LXX found in the Vatican MS. than to that of the Hebrew, but differs from it in placing Job before the Psalter instead of after the Song of Songs, and in placing the Minor Prophets after instead of before the Major Prophets, and arranging them as they stand in the Hebrew text.

2. *Names of the Psalter.* The Septuagint translators employed the word ψαλμός[2], *psalm*, to render the Heb. word *mizmōr*, which was the technical term for a song with musical accompaniment (see p. xix). The collection was styled simply *Psalms*, as in the Vatican MS. (ψαλμοί, cp. Luke xxiv. 44), or *The Book of Psalms* (Luke xx. 42; Acts i. 20), or in later times *The Psalter*, ψαλτήρ or ψαλτήριον[3]. The Greek words have come down to us through the Latin *psalmus*, *psalterium*.

In the Hebrew Bible the title of the collection is *Book of Praises*, or simply, *Praises: Sepher Tehillim* abbreviated into *Tillim* or *Tillin*[4]. This title was known to Hippolytus[5] and

[1] Comp. too Philo (B.C. 20—A.D. 50) *de vita contempl.* (ii. 475): νόμους καὶ λόγια θεσπισθέντα διὰ προφητῶν καὶ ὕμνους καὶ τὰ ἄλλα οἷς ἐπιστήμη καὶ εὐσέβεια συναύξονται καὶ τελειοῦται. "Laws and oracles delivered by prophets and hymns and the other writings by which knowledge and piety are increased and perfected."

[2] ψαλμός denotes (1) the music of a stringed instrument; (2) a song sung to the accompaniment of such music.

[3] ψαλτήριον meant originally a *stringed instrument*, a *psaltery* (frequently in the LXX), and was afterwards applied to a *collection of psalms*, a *psalter*. In this sense it is used by Hippolytus, Athanasius, Epiphanius, and stands as the title of the Psalms in the Alexandrine MS.

[4] The word is derived from the same root as *Hallelujah*, and the verb is frequently used in connexion with the Temple Service (1 Chron. xvi. 4 &c.).

[5] p. 188, ed. Lagarde. Ἕλληνες περιέγραψαν τὴν βίβλον Σέφρα θελελμ. The genuineness of the fragment of Hippolytus which treats of the inscriptions, authorship, divisions, and order of the Psalms, is however doubtful. See Dr Salmon in the *Dict. of Christian Biography*, iii. 103.

Origen[1] in the first half of the third century A.D., and to Jerome[2]. Though the word *praise* occurs frequently in the Psalter, only one Psalm (cxlv) bears the title *A Praise*, and the name *Book of Praises* probably originated in the use of the collection as the hymn-book of the Second Temple[3]. Many indeed of the Psalms cannot be so designated, but no more fitting name could be found for a book, of which praise and thanksgiving are predominant characteristics, and which ends with a diapason of Hallelujahs.

Another title, apparently that of an early collection of Davidic Psalms, was *Tephillōth* or *Prayers* (lxxii. 20)[4]. Only five Psalms, xvii, lxxxvi, xc, cii, cxlii, are so entitled; but again, although some Psalms (e.g. i, ii) contain no direct address to God, the title is a suitable one. Prayer in its widest sense includes all elevation of the mind to God[5]. Hannah's thanksgiving and Habakkuk's ode are both described as prayer (1 Sam. ii. 1; Hab. iii. 1).

3. *Numbering of the Psalms.* The Massoretic Text and the LXX both reckon a total of 150 Psalms. The 151st Psalm, which is added in the LXX, is expressly said to be "outside the number[6]." But this reckoning has not been uniformly

[1] In Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* vi. 25 (ed. Burton) Σφαρθελλείμ.

[2] In the Preface to his *Psalterium iuxta Hebraeos* (p. 2, ed. Lagarde): "titulus ipse Hebraicus *sephar tallim*, quod interpretatur *volumen hymnorum*."

[3] Cp. Neh. xii. 46.

[4] The LXX rendering ὕμνοι however may point to another reading תהלות, *praises*.

[5] "Lege totum Psalterium...nihil erit nisi ad Deum in cunctis operibus deprecatio." S. Jerome *contra Pelag.* i. 5.

[6] This Psalm appears to have been translated from a Hebrew original, but the contrast between it and the canonical Psalms is so noteworthy that it seems worth while to append a version of it.

"This Psalm was written by David with his own hand (and it is outside the number) when he fought in single combat with Goliath.

1. I was little among my brethren,
   and the youngest in my father's house;
   I fed my father's sheep.
2. My hands made a harp,
   my fingers contrived a psaltery.
3. And who will declare unto my Lord?
   He is the Lord, it is He that heareth.

observed. Some ancient Jewish authorities reckon 149 others 147 Psalms,[1] the latter number, as the Jerusalem Talmud says, "according to the years of our father Jacob." These totals are obtained by uniting one or all of the pairs i, ii: ix, x: cxiv, cxv: or other Psalms. Although the Hebrew and the LXX agree in the total, they differ in the details of the enumeration. The LXX unites ix and x, cxiv and cxv, and divides cxvi and cxlvii. It may be useful to subjoin a comparative table, for while our modern English versions follow the Hebrew reckoning, the Vulgate and the older English Versions (e.g. Wycliffe and Coverdale) and modern Roman Catholic versions based upon it, follow that of the LXX.

Hebrew (Later English Versions).		LXX (Vulgate. Older English Rom. Cath. Versions)
i—viii.	=	i—viii.
ix, x.	=	ix.
xi—cxiii.	=	x—cxii.
cxiv, cxv.	=	cxiii.
cxvi.	=	cxiv, cxv.
cxvii—cxlvi.	=	cxvi—cxlv.
cxlvii.	=	cxlvi, cxlvii.
cxlviii—cl.	=	cxlviii—cl.

Thus for the greater part of the Psalter the numeration of the LXX is one behind that of the Hebrew.

The English reader should also remember that the title of a Psalm, when it consists of more than one or two words, is reckoned as a verse and sometimes e.g. in Ps. li as two verses, in the Hebrew text. Attention to this is necessary in using the

4. He sent His angel,
and took me from my father's sheep,
and anointed me with the oil of his anointing.
5. My brethren were comely and tall,
and in them the Lord had no pleasure.
6. I went forth to meet the Philistine,
and he cursed me by his idols.
7. But I drew the sword from his side, and beheaded him,
and took away the reproach from the children of Israel."

[1] So in a MS. described in Ginsburg's *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, p. 777. He mentions other unusual numerations of 150 and 170 Psalms, pp. 536, 725.

references of commentaries which, like that of Delitzsch, follow the numbering of the verses in the original.

4. *Divisions of the Psalter.* The Psalter has from ancient times been divided into five books:

Book i = Pss. i—xli:
„ ii = Pss. xlii—lxxii:
„ iii = Pss. lxxiii—lxxxix:
„ iv = Pss. xc—cvi:
„ v = Pss. cvii—cl.

These divisions are indicated by doxologies of a liturgical character, differing slightly in form, at the close of the first four books (xli. 13, lxxii. 18, 19, lxxxix. 52, cvi. 48). The first three of these doxologies obviously form no part of the Psalms to which they are appended. The fourth however (see note on Ps. cvi. 48) appears to belong to the Psalm, and not to be merely an editor's addition to mark the end of a book. It came however to be regarded (somewhat inappropriately, for Pss. cvi and cvii are closely connected) as marking the division between Books iv and v. No special doxology is added to Ps. cl. It is in itself an appropriate concluding doxology for the whole Psalter.

This five-fold division is earlier than the LXX, which contains the doxologies. It is often referred to by Jewish and Christian authorities, and compared to the five books of the Pentateuch.

Thus the *Midrash*[1] on Ps. i. 1: "Moses gave the Israelites the five books of the Law, and to correspond to these David gave them the Book of Psalms containing five books."

Hippolytus[?] (ed. Lagarde, p. 193): "Let it not escape your notice...that the Hebrews divided the Psalter also into five books, that it might be a second Pentateuch."

Jerome, in the *Prologus Galeatus*: "Tertius ordo Hagiographa possidet. Et primus liber incipit a Job. Secundus a

[1] An ancient Jewish commentary, probably however in its present form not earlier than the 10th century A.D. But older Jewish authorities recognise the division. See Robertson Smith, *Old Test. in Jewish Church*, p. 195.

David, quem quinque incisionibus (*sectionibus*) et uno Psalmorum volumine comprehendunt." No doubt he chose this form of expression carefully, for in his preface to the Psalter he somewhat passionately affirms the unity of the Book[1].

The division is referred to by most of the Fathers, some of whom, as Ambrose, explain it allegorically; others, as Gregory of Nyssa, find in the several books so many steps rising to moral perfection. As will be shewn presently, the division of the books in part corresponds to older collections out of which the Psalter was formed, in part is purely artificial, and probably had its origin in the wish to compare the Psalter with the Pentateuch.

CHAPTER III.

THE TITLES OF THE PSALMS.

To nearly all the Psalms in the first three Books, and to some of those in the fourth and fifth Books, are prefixed titles, designating either (1) the character of the poem, or (2) matters connected with its musical setting, or (3) its liturgical use, or (4) the author, or perhaps more strictly, the collection from which the Psalm was taken, or (5) the historical occasion for which it was written or which it illustrates. Only 34 Psalms have no title, namely Pss. i, ii, x, xxviii, xliii, lxxi, xci, xciii—xcvii, xcix, civ—cvii, cxi—cxix cxxxv—cxxxvii, cxlvi—cl.

Such titles may occur separately or in combination. Many of them are extremely obscure, and their meanings can only be conjectured. All that will be attempted here is to give the most probable explanations. An elaborate discussion of the innumerable interpretations which have been proposed would be mere waste of time. Some special titles which occur but once will be

[1] 'Scio quosdam priscae psalterium in quinque libros esse divisum... nos Hebraeorum auctoritatem secuti et maxime apostolorum qui semper in novo testamento psalmorum librum nominant, unum volumen asserimus.'

discussed in the introductions to the Psalms to which they belong.

1. *Titles descriptive of the character of the poem.*

Psalm[1]. *Mizmōr*, rendered *Psalm*, is a technical term found only in the titles of the Psalter[2]. It is prefixed to 57 Psalms, and with few exceptions is preceded or followed by the name of the author, generally that of David. The verb from which *mizmōr* is derived occurs frequently in the Psalter (e.g. vii. 17, xlvii. 6, 7, cxlix. 3) but rarely elsewhere (Judg. v. 3; 2 Sam. xxii. 50; 1 Chr. xvi. 9; Is. xii. 5). It appears originally to have meant *to make melody*, like the Lat. *canere*, but came to be applied specially to instrumental music, as distinguished from vocal music. *Mizmōr* then means *a piece of music*, a song with instrumental accompaniment.

Song[3]. *Shīr*, rendered *song*, is the general term for a song or canticle. It occurs 30 times in the titles, generally preceded or followed by *mizmōr*, and not unfrequently in the text of the Psalms (e.g. xxviii. 7, xl. 3, cxxxvii. 3, 4), and in other books. It is applied to secular as well as sacred songs (Gen. xxxi. 27; Jud. v. 12; 1 Kings iv. 32; Is. xxx. 29; Neh. xii. 27, 36, 46).

Maschil[4] is found as the title of thirteen[5] Psalms, eleven of which are in Books ii and iii. The meaning is obscure. (*a*) It has been explained to mean *a didactic psalm*. Comp. the use of the cognate verb in xxxii. 8 'I will instruct thee.' But of the Psalms which bear the title only xxxii and lxxviii are specifically 'didactic.' (*b*) Delitzsch supposes it to mean *a meditation*. (*c*) Most probable however is Ewald's explanation, *a skilful psalm*. The word is used in Ps. xlvii. 7, 'sing ye praises *with understanding*' (Heb. *maskīl*, R.V. marg., *in a skilful psalm*.

[1] מִזְמוֹר: LXX *ψαλμός*: Vulg. *psalmus*.

[2] It occurs in the original Hebrew of Ecclesiasticus xlix. 1, in the sense of *music* or *song* generally: "as *mizmōr* at a banquet of wine."

[3] שִׁיר: LXX in titles usually *ᾠδή*, in text *ᾠδή* or *ᾆσμα*.

[4] מַשְׂכִּיל: LXX *συνέσεως* or as proper name: Vulg. *intellectus* or *ad intellectum*: Jer. *eruditio*.

[5] xxxii, xlii, xliv, xlv, lii, liii, liv, lv, lxxiv, lxxviii, lxxxviii, lxxxix, cxlii.

it may have denoted something more definite than the ordinary *mizmor*, a psalm with musical setting of a specially delicate and artistic character, 'a *cunning* psalm.'

Michtam occurs in the title of six Psalms, preceded or followed by *of David*[1]. It is probably, like *Maschîl*, a musical term, the meaning of which cannot now be determined. A few of the many explanations which have been given may be mentioned. (1) The LXX and Theodotion render it στηλογραφία or εἰς στηλογραφίαν, *an inscription* or *for an inscription*. Cp. the Targ., *an excellent inscription* or *writing*. Hence Delitzsch explains, *a poem of epigrammatic character*, containing pithy or expressive sayings. (2) In defiance of all grammar and analogy Aquila, Symmachus and Jerome treat the word as a compound, and render it as an epithet of David, *the humble and sincere* or *blameless*. (3) *A golden Psalm* (A.V. marg.), with reference to the preciousness of its contents, like the *golden sayings* (χρυσᾶ ἔπη) of Pythagoras. (4) An unpublished poem. (5) A Psalm of hidden, mysterious meaning.

Shiggaion[2] occurs in the title of Ps. vii, and the Prayer of Habakkuk is said to be *set to Shigionoth*. The word is derived from a verb which means *to wander*, and it probably denotes a particular style of poetry or music, or it may include both, and mean 'a dithyrambic poem in wild ecstatic wandering rhythms, with corresponding music.'

A Prayer stands as the title of five Psalms (xvii, lxxxvi, xc, cii, cxlii). In the subscription to Ps. lxxii the preceding collection of Davidic Psalms is designated as *The prayers of David*[3]. Hab. iii is called *A prayer of Habakkuk*. Cp. 1 Sam. ii. 1.

A Praise is the title of one Psalm only (cxlv), though *Praises* came eventually to be the title of the whole book.

[1] xvi, lvi—lx.

[2] שִׁגָּיוֹן plur. שִׁגְיוֹנוֹת: LXX in Ps. vii simply ψαλμός, in Hab. μετὰ ᾠδῆς. Jer. *ignoratio*, or *pro ignorantione*. So Aq. ἀγνόημα. Symm. Theod. ὑπὲρ ἀγνοιῶν, supposing it to refer to the contents of the Psalm

[3] The LXX ὕμνοι may however point to another reading תְּהִלּוֹת, *praises*.

2. *Titles connected with the musical setting or performance.*

To the chief Musician[1]: R.V. **For the Chief Musician**: perhaps rather **Of the Precentor**: is prefixed to fifty-five Psalms, of which only two (xvi, lxvii) are anonymous, and most bear the name of David. Fifty-two of these are in Books I—III, and three in Book V. It is found also in the subscription to Habakkuk's Prayer (Hab. iii. 19). The verb, of which the word is a participle, is used in Chronicles and Ezra in the sense of *superintending* (1 Chr. xxiii. 4; 2 Chr. ii. 2, 18; xxxiv. 12; Ezra iii. 8, 9), and in 1 Chr. xv. 21 in the specific sense of *leading* (R.V.) the music. There can be little doubt that the word *m'naṣṣēaḥ* means the *precentor*, or *conductor* of the Temple choir, who trained the choir and led the music, and that it refers to the use of the Psalm in the Temple Services. The preposition prefixed to it is generally rendered *for*, and is supposed to mean that the Psalm was to be handed over to the precentor for musical setting and performance. This explanation however does not account for the rarity of the term in the later books, where the Psalms are predominantly liturgical in character. It seems more probable that the preposition should be rendered *of*, and that it indicates that the Psalm belonged to an older collection known as *The Precentor's Collection*, in the same way as the titles 'of David,' 'of Asaph,' 'of the sons of Korah' probably indicate the collections from which the Psalms bearing them were taken[2]. The reason commonly given for its absence in Books IV and V, that it was unnecessary, because the destination of these Psalms was obvious, is hardly satisfactory. Many of

[1] לַמְנַצֵּחַ (*lam'naṣṣēaḥ*). The Targum renders it *to praise*, giving the general sense. But the other Ancient Versions were completely at a loss. The LXX renders εἰς τὸ τέλος, Vulg. *in finem*, 'unto the end' or 'for ever,' reading the word as a substantive לָנֶצַח, in the sense of לָנֶצַח (*lānεṣaḥ*). The other Greek Versions and Jerome connected it with the sense of *victory*, which is one of the meanings of the root in late Heb. and Aramaic. Thus Aquila τῷ νικοποιῷ, 'for the victor.' Symmachus, ἐπινίκιος, 'a song of victory': Theodotion, εἰς τὸ νικος, 'for the victory': Jerome, *victori*. So too the LXX in Hab. iii. 19, τοῦ νικῆσαι. These renderings gave the ingenuity of the Fathers great opportunities for allegorical interpretations.

[2] See the *Oxford Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 684.

the Psalms in Books I—III which have it prefixed to them, are clearly intended for public use. It seems to have been a term belonging to an older collection, which went out of use in later times. At any rate the translation of the LXX did not understand its meaning.

Selah. This term, though not belonging to the titles, may conveniently be discussed here.

The word is found 71 times in the Psalter in 39 Psalms, 3 times in Habakkuk iii, and nowhere else in the O.T.[1] In 16 Psalms it occurs once; in 15 twice; in 7 and in Hab. iii three times: in 1, four times. Of these Psalms 9 are in Book I: 17 in Book II: 11 in Book III; none in Book IV: 2 only in Book V. It is to be further noted that all these Psalms, with the exception of the anonymous lxvi and lxvii, bear the name of David or of the Levitical singers (the sons of Korah, Asaph, Heman, Ethan); and all bear indications of being intended to be set to music. The majority of them (28 of the 39: cp. Hab. iii. 19) have, 'For the Chief Musician' in the title, frequently with a further specification of the instruments or melody (iv, ix, xlvi, liv, lv, lvii, lx, lx, lxi, lxii, lxvii, lxxv, lxxvi, lxxvii, lxxxi, lxxxiv, lxxxviii; Hab. iii. 19). Of the remaining eleven, eight are designated *mizmôr*, 'psalm,' two *maschil*, and one *shiggaion*.

It may fairly be inferred from these facts that Selah is a technical term of great antiquity, having reference to musical accompaniment. Its precise meaning, however, is quite uncertain. There are two main lines of ancient tradition:

(*a*) By the LXX always, and by Symmachus and Theodotion generally, it is rendered διάψαλμα (*diapsalma*), which may denote either louder playing, *forte*; or, more probably, *an instrumental interlude*, while the singing ceased. The Syriac (with a few exceptions) gives an abbreviation of the Greek word. The Vulgate omits it entirely.

[1] It occurs in the third and eighteenth of the *Shemônêh Ezreh* or *Eighteen Benedictions* of the Jewish Liturgy, and its Greek equivalent is found twice in the Psalms of Solomon (xvii. 31; xviii. 10).

[2] Cp. διαυλιον, an interlude on the flute. The explanation *a change of rhythm or melody, or a transition in the sense*, can hardly be right, as *Selah* occurs sometimes at the end of a Psalm.

(*b*) The most ancient Jewish traditions interpret the word to mean *for ever*. So the Targum, with some variety of rendering, Aquila, the 'Fifth' and 'Sixth' Greek versions, Symmachus, Theodotion, and the Syriac occasionally; and Jerome, who renders *semper*[1].

Of these ancient renderings, that of the LXX probably preserves a true tradition as to the usage of *Selah*: but the meaning 'always' is based on no known etymology, and is obviously unsuitable in the majority of passages.

Of the multitude of modern explanations the most generally accepted is that *Selah* is derived from a root meaning *to raise* and signifies 'Up!'

It is then a direction to the musicians to strike up, either with a louder accompaniment, or with an interlude while the singing ceased. This explanation is supported by the conjunction of *Selah* in Ps. ix. 16 with *Higgaion*, a term used of instrumental music in Ps. xcii. 3. It is moreover confirmed by an examination of the passages in which *Selah* occurs. In the majority of cases it is found at the end of a strophe, or before the introduction of some fresh thought, where an interlude would be most natural (Ps. iii. 2, 4. 8; xxiv. 6, 10, xliv. 8: xlvi. 3, 7, 11. lxvii. 4, 7. 15); or before some appeal or utterance which would be distinguished from what precedes and would be emphasised by an interlude or by a stronger accompaniment (Ps. vii. 5; l. 6; lx. 4; lxxv. 3; lxxxi. 7; lxxxiii. 8). There are no doubt many instances which do not appear to come under these general principles; but the Hebrew idea of what was fitting by way of accompaniment may have differed from ours; and in some cases the accuracy of the Massoretic Text is doubtful. The Septuagint does not always agree with it in the insertion or omission of *Selah*, and an obscure

[1] For an interesting account of the various opinions held in his day consult his letter to Marcella (Opp. i. col. 135. ed. Vallarsi). He decides in favour of the rendering *semper*, 'always,' because it is that given by Aquila, 'the most careful interpreter of the meanings of Hebrew words,' and says that it is designed 'to connect what precedes with what follows, or to shew that what has been said is everlasting': and compares the use of the word with that of *Amen* or *Shalom* (peace), to mark the end of a passage, and confirm its contents.

technical term would be specially liable to be omitted or wrongly inserted.

The explanation given in the *Oxford Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 699, also deserves consideration. *Selah* is there explained to be a liturgical direction to the congregation, meaning *Lift up* your voices in the benediction 'Blessed be Jehovah for ever and ever'; or *Extol* Jehovah for ever and ever. Accordingly it indicates the place of the benedictions (cp Neh. ix. 5) and the tradition that it means *for ever* is accounted for by the closing words of the benediction.

Higgaion occurs in ix. 16 along with Selah as a musical direction, and in the text of xcii. 3, 'with *higgaion* upon the harp.' It denotes apparently an instrumental interlude of some kind. The word has the sense of *meditation* in xix. 14, and according to the usage of the cognate verb, which denotes the growling of a lion (Is. xxxi. 4), the moaning of a dove (Is. xxxviii. 14; lix. 11), or of a mourner (Is. xvi. 7), it should mean *murmuring, meditative music*, rather than *resounding music*.

Two terms refer to *musical instruments*.

On Neginōth[1]: rather, **with music of stringed instruments**: occurs six times in the Psalter[2]: and in Hab. iii. 19 we find *on my stringed instruments*. **Upon Neginah**: rather, **with music of a stringed instrument** (lxi): may be a variation of the expression, or may indicate the melody to which the Psalm was to be sung[3]. The word is derived from a verb meaning *to play on stringed instruments* (1 Sam. xvi. 16—18, 23). It occurs elsewhere in the sense of *music* or *song* (Job xxx. 9: Ps. lxxvii. 6; Is. xxxviii. 20; Lam. v. 14). The title no doubt indicates that the Psalm was to be accompanied by stringed instruments, perhaps by these only.

Upon Nehiloth[4]: R.V. **with the Nehiloth**, or (marg.) *wind*

[1] בְּנְגִינוֹת: LXX ἐν ψαλμοῖς (iv): ἐν ὕμνοις generally: in Hab. ἐν τῇ ᾠδῇ αὐτοῦ: Vulg. *in carminibus*: Jer. *in psalmis*: Symm. διὰ ψαλτηρίων.

[2] **Pss. iv, vi, liv, lv, lxvii, lxxvi.**

[3] The Heb. is עַל נְגִינַת, which may mean *set to neginath*, or, *the song of...*: some word of definition being lost.

[4] אֶל הַנְּחִילוֹת. The Greek and Latin versions are quite astray,

instruments in Ps. v only. Possibly *flutes* of some kind are meant. For the use of these in sacred music see Is. xxx. 29 (*a pipe*): 1 Sam. x. 5; 1 Kings i. 40; and on their use in the services of the Second Temple see Edersheim, *The Temple and its Services*, p. 55. It is not however the usual word for *flute*.

Two terms probably indicate the *character* or *pitch* of the music.

Upon Alāmôth[1]: R.V. **set to A.**: is found in the title of Ps. xlvi, and may possibly once have stood in the title of Ps. ix, and either as a subscription to Ps. xlviii, or in the title of Ps. xlix. See the notes there. The term appears to mean *in the manner of maidens*, or, *for maidens' voices: soprano.*

Upon Sheminith[2]: R.V. **set to the S.**, i.e. as marg., *the eighth* (Pss. vi and xii): probably denotes that the setting was to be an octave lower, or, on the lower octave: *tenor* or *bass*. Both terms occur together in 1 Chr. xv. 19–21. Heman, Asaph, and Jeduthun were appointed "with cymbals of brass to sound aloud": eight other Levites, "with psalteries set to Alamoth"; and six "with harps set to the Sheminith, to lead."

Upon Gittith[3]: R.V. **set to the Gittith**: occurs in the titles of Pss. viii, lxxxi, lxxxiv. In form *Gittith* is a fem. adj. derived from *Gath*, and may mean either (1) some Gittite instrument: so the Targ.; 'the harp which David brought from Gath': or

referring the word to the contents of the Psalm. The LXX and Theodotion: *ὑπὲρ τῆς κληρονομούσης*: Vulg. *pro ea quae hereditatem consequitur*: Aq. *ἀπὸ (?) κληροδοσιῶν*: Symm. *ὑπὲρ κληρουχιῶν*: Jer. *super hereditatibus*: all connect the word with the root נָחַל, *to inherit*.

[1] עַל עֲלָמוֹת. The ancient Versions are again at fault. The LXX renders: *ὑπὲρ τῶν κρυφίων*: Vulg. *pro occultis*: Symm. *ὑπὲρ τῶν αἰωνίων*: Aq. *ἐπὶ νεανιοτήτων*: and so Jer. *pro iuventutibus*.

[2] עַל הַשְּׁמִינִית. The LXX literally *ὑπὲρ τῆς ὀγδόης*: Vulg. *pro octava*. Both terms are allegorically explained by the Fathers, of the mysteries of the faith, the octave of eternity, &c. &c.

[3] עַל הַגִּתִּית. The LXX and Symm. have *ὑπὲρ τῶν ληνῶν*: Vulg. and Jer. *pro torcularibus*, 'for the wine-presses,' reading גִּתּוֹת for גִּתִּית. Hence some have explained the title, 'set to the melody of a vintage song.' Aq. and Theod. render the Massoretic text in Ps. viii: *ὑπὲρ τῆς γεθθιτιδος*, but according to the Syro-hexaplar version Aq. had *ἐπὶ τοῦ ληνοῦ* or *ἐπὶ τῶν ληνῶν* in lxxxi and lxxxiv.

(2) a Gittite melody: possibly, as has been conjectured, the march of the Gittite guard (2 Sam. xv. 18).

The rendering of the LXX, Symm., and Jer. *For* or *over the winepresses* may however preserve the true reading, indicating that these Psalms were sung at the Feast of Tabernacles or Ingathering at the end of the vintage. Ps. lxxxi appears to have been specially intended for that festival, and Ps. lxxxiv is virtually a 'Psalm of going up,' for the use of pilgrims to the three great feasts.

To Jeduthun[1]: R.V. **after the manner of J.** (lxii, lxxvii): probably means that the Psalm was set to some melody composed by or called after David's chief musician (1 Chr. xvi. 41). In the title of Ps. xxxix Jeduthun appears to be named as the chief musician intended.

A series of obscure titles probably indicate the *melody* to which the Psalm was to be sung by a reference to the opening words of some well-known song[2]. Such are the titles of

Ps. ix: **set to Muth labben** (R.V.), meaning possibly *Die for the son*[3].

Ps. xxii: **set to Ayyéleth hash-shachar**, i.e. *the hind of the morning.*

Pss. xlv, lxix: **set to Shoshannim** (R.V.), i.e. *Lilies.* Ps. lx: **set to Shushan Eduth** (R.V.), i.e. *The lily of testimony.* Ps. lxxx: **set to Shoshannim Eduth** (R.V.), i.e. *Lilies, a testimony.* All these titles probably denote the melody to which the Psalm was to be sung, not the subject of the Psalm or a lily-shaped instrument[4].

[1] עַל יְדוּתוּן.

[2] "Similarly the ancient Syrian hymn writers prefix to their compositions such musical titles as 'To the tune of ('al dâlâ dô'), I will open my mouth with knowledge.'" Robertson Smith, *O. T. in Jewish Church*, p. 209.

[3] The LXX has ὑπὲρ τῶν κρυφίων τοῦ υἱοῦ, *concerning the secrets* [i.e. sins, cp. xc. 8] *of the son*, reading the two words *'al-mûth* as one, *'alamôth*. Similarly Aquila read the words as one, *'almûth*, and rendered them νεανιότητος τοῦ υἱοῦ, *of the youth of the son*; and Theod. ὑπὲρ ἀκμῆς τοῦ υἱοῦ, *concerning the maturity of the son.* Cp. above on *Alâmôth*.

[4] The LXX reading the word with different vowels renders ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀλλοιωθησομένων, or τοῖς ἀλλοιωθησομένοις, *for those who shall be changed.*

Ps. lvi: set to Yonath elem rechokim, i.e. *The silent one of them that are afar off*, or, as read with different vowels, *The dove of the distant terebinths*[1].

Four Psalms (lvii–lix, lxxv) have the title, [set to] Al-tashcheth, i.e. *Destroy not*; possibly the vintage song to which there is an allusion in Is. lxv. 8. See Introd. to Ps. lvii.

The titles of Ps. liii: set to Mahlath: and lxxxviii: set to Mahalath Leannoth: are extremely obscure, but probably belong to this class[2].

For further details see the notes in each case.

3. A few titles refer to the *liturgical use of the Psalm*. In the time of the Second Temple, each day of the week had its special Psalm, which was sung at the offering of the morning sacrifice[3]. Thus Ps. xcii is entitled "A Psalm, a Song for the Sabbath day." This is the only reference to the daily Psalms in the Heb. text: but in the LXX. Ps. xxiv is assigned to the first day of the week (*τῆς μιᾶς σαββάτων*); Ps. xlviii to the second day (*τῇ δευτέρᾳ σαββάτου*); Ps. xciv to the fourth day (*τετράδι σαββάτων*); Ps. xcii to the sixth day of the week (*εἰς τὴν παρασκευὴν τοῦ σαββάτου*). The Old Latin Version further refers Ps. lxxxi to the fifth day (*pro quinta sabbati*). These titles agree with the arrangement given in the Mishna (*Tamid*, vii. 3), according to which the Psalm for the third day was Ps. lxxxii.

The title of Pss. xxxviii and lxx *to bring to remembrance*, or, as R.V. marg., *to make memorial*, may indicate that they were sung at the offering of incense (see Introd. to Ps. xxxviii), and that of Ps. c, *A Psalm of thanksgiving* (R.V.), marg. *for the thank offering*, may mark that it was sung when thank offerings (lvi. 12) were offered.

[1] The rendering of the LXX *ὑπὲρ τοῦ λαοῦ τοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἁγίων ἀπεσκυρτισμένου, for the people removed far from the sanctuary*, which at first sight seems hopelessly divergent, is explained by Baethgen as a paraphrase. *By the dove* the translator understood Israel, and for *elem* he read *ēlīm*, which he took to mean *gods*. But thinking it unseemly to describe Israel as *the dove of the distant gods*, he substituted a free paraphrase.

[2] The LXX simply transliterates *ὑπὲρ Μαελέθ*. Aq. Symm. Theod. Jer. render *for* or *in the dances*, a curiously inappropriate title for such Pss.

[3] Cp. Ecclus. l. 14 ff. for a description of the service.

The title of Ps. xxx, **A Song at the Dedication of the House**, may refer to its use at the Festival of the Dedication, instituted by Judas Maccabaeus in B.C. 164, when the Temple was re-dedicated after its profanation by Antiochus (1 Macc. iv. 59; John x. 22).

The title of Ps. xxix in the LXX. ἐξοδίου σκηνῆς (Vulg. *in consummatione tabernaculi*), refers to its use on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

To teach is part of the title prefixed to Ps. lx. A comparison of Deut. xxxi. 19 and 2 Sam. i. 18 makes it probable that it was to be learnt by heart and recited on public occasions.

On these titles see further in the notes on the particular Psalms.

A song of Degrees, rather, **A Song of Ascents** (R.V.), or, **for the Goings up**, is the title prefixed to 15 Psalms (cxx–cxxxiv), which appear to have formed a separate collection, bearing the title *The Songs of the Goings up* (or, *of the Going up*), which was afterwards transferred to each separate Psalm.

Various explanations of this title have been proposed.

(1) The LXX renders ᾠδὴ τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν: Vulg. and Jer., *canticum graduum*, 'a song of the steps.' It has been supposed that they were so called because they were sung upon the flight of 15 steps which led from the Court of the Women to the Court of the Men in the Second Temple. But Delitzsch has shewn that the passage of the Talmud quoted in support of this explanation really says nothing at all about the singing of these Psalms upon the steps, or the derivation of the name from them, but merely compares the number of the Psalms with that of the steps.

(2) An explanation which has found considerable favour in modern times regards the term as denoting a particular kind of 'ascending' structure, in which each verse takes up and repeats a word or clause from the preceding verse. Ps. cxxi offers a good example of this structure: but apart from the fact that no trace can be found of this technical meaning of the word 'ascent' elsewhere, the structure is neither peculiar to these Psalms nor characteristic of all of them.

(3) As 'the ascent' or 'going up' was the regular term for

the Return from Babylon (Ezra vii. 9), some have supposed that these Psalms were sung by the returning exiles on their march. So the Syriac Version, and probably Aq. Symm. and Theod., who render ᾠσμα τῶν ἀναβασεων or εἰς τὰς ἀναβάσεις. But the contents of many of the Psalms do not favour this explanation.

(4) 'To go up' was the regular term for making pilgrimage to Jerusalem at the great festivals (1 Sam. i. 3; Ps. cxxii. 4). 'The songs of the goings up' may have been the name for the songs which were sung on these occasions. We know that the pilgrims went up with singing (Is. xxx. 29; Ps. xlii. 4), and many of these Psalms are well suited for such occasions[1]; while others, though not so obviously appropriate, might well have been employed for the purpose. This is on the whole the most probable explanation, although the substantive 'going up' is not used elsewhere in this technical sense[2].

4. *Titles relating to Authorship.* These are regularly introduced by a preposition denoting *of* or *belonging to*, *by*, the so-called '*lamed auctoris*.' In some instances, as in Hab. iii. 1, it was no doubt intended to denote authorship; but in others, as will be seen presently (p. xxxiii), it was probably intended to denote *origin*, rather than, in the strict sense of the word, authorship. This is clearly the case with the title *A Psalm of the sons of Korah*, which must mean 'a Psalm from the collection known as that of the sons of K.'; probably also with the title *A Psalm of Asaph*, and, at least in many instances, with the title *A Psalm of David*.

(*a*) One Psalm (xc) bears the name of **Moses**.

(*b*) 73 Psalms bear the name of **David**: viz. all those in Book I, except i and ii, which are prefatory; x, which is part of ix; and xxxiii, which appears to be a later addition: 18 in Book II (li—lxv, lxviii—lxx); one in Book III (lxxxvi); two in Book IV (ci, ciii); 15 in Book V (cviii—cx, cxxii, cxxiv, cxxxi, cxxxiii, cxxxviii—cxlv).

[1] E.g. cxxi—cxxiii, cxxv, cxxvii, cxxviii, cxxxii—cxxxiv.

[2] Unless Wellhausen is right in altering מסלות *highways*, to מעלות *goings up*, pilgrimages, in lxxxiv. 5, following the LXX ἀναβάσεις.

(*c*) Two (lxxii, cxxvii) bear the name of **Solomon**.

(*d*) 12 (l, lxxiii—lxxxii) bear the name of **Asaph**, one of David's principal musicians (1 Chr. vi. 39, xv. 17, xvi. 5 ff.; 2 Chr. v. 12).

(*e*) To the sons of **Korah** are attributed 10 or 11: xlii [xliii], xliv—xlix, lxxxiv, lxxxv, lxxxvii, lxxxviii [?], for according to analogy the title is to be rendered as in R.V., **of the sons of K.**; not, as in A.V., *for the sons of K.*

(*f*) The sages **Heman the Ezrachite** and **Ethan the Ezrachite** (1 Kings iv. 31) have each a psalm attributed to them (lxxxviii, lxxxix).

5. *Titles describing the occasion of the Psalm* are prefixed to 13 Psalms, all of which bear the name of David. Pss. vii, lix, lvi, xxxiv, lii, lvii, cxlii, liv, are referred to the period of his persecution by Saul: Ps. xviii to the climax of his reign; Ps. lx to the Syro-Ammonite war; Ps. li to his fall: Pss. iii and lxiii to his flight from Absalom.

The Value of the Titles. We have now to inquire whether these titles give any authentic information, or must be regarded as additions by editors and compilers, largely, if not wholly, conjectural and untrustworthy.

(i) With regard to the technical *musical terms* of the titles there is little evidence to shew whether they belong entirely to the time of the Second Temple, or in part at least, are of more ancient origin. The title of Habakkuk's prayer, *set to Shigionoth*, and its subscription, *For the Precentor, on my stringed instruments*, would be evidence for the use of such technical terms in pre-exilic times, if we could be sure that they came from the prophet himself and were not later additions. Elsewhere however we meet with terms of this kind only in the Chronicler's description of David's musical services[1], where we read of the use of "psalteries set to Alamoth," and "harps set to the Sheminith, to lead" (1 Chr. xv. 20, 21). The Heb. verb *to lead*, is that of which the word rendered *Chief Musician* or *Precentor*

[1] *Neginoth* in Ps. xxxviii. [illegible] accompanied by stringed instruments, not, as apparently in the Psalm titles, the music of stringed instruments, or the instruments themselves.

is the participle. As it is found in Chronicles and Ezra only, and not (with the possible exception of Hab. iii. 19) in the pre-exilic literature, it is presumed to be a post-exilic word[1]; and it is inferred that this, and probably the other technical terms, belong to the period of the Return from Babylon. Still it must be remembered that the remains of pre-exilic literature are not of a kind in which the technical terms of the musical ritual of the Temple would be likely to occur.

It is however clear that these titles do not belong to the latest stage of the history of the Psalter. They are almost entirely wanting in Books IV and V, though a large proportion of these Psalms were obviously intended for liturgical use. Moreover though the Septuagint translators found them in their text, they were unable to understand even their general purport. It is possible that a knowledge of the technical terms of Palestinian music had not reached Egypt, but it is more probable that they were obsolete and no longer intelligible at the time when the Greek Version of the Psalter was made.

(ii) The titles referring to the *liturgical use* of Psalms must in some cases at least, if that of Ps. xxx is rightly explained to refer to its use at the Festival of the Dedication, have been added at a late date. Several of them, though agreeing with Jewish tradition, are not found in the Hebrew text.

(iii) It is now generally acknowledged that the titles relating to the *authorship and occasion* of the Psalms cannot be regarded as prefixed by the authors themselves, or as representing trustworthy traditions, and accordingly giving reliable information. The chief reason[2] for this conclusion is that many of them, as

[1] It should however be noted that the cognate substantive occurs in 1 Sam. xv. 29, where Jehovah is styled the *Eminence* or *Glory* of Israel.

[2] The variations in MSS. and Versions are often alleged as a reason for distrusting the titles. The extent of the variations may easily be exaggerated. A few Heb. MSS. assign lxvi, lxvii, to David. In the LXX David's name is prefixed to xxxiii, xliii, lxvii, lxxi (with the curious addition "of the sons of Jonadab and those who were first carried captive"), xci, xciii—xcix, civ, cxxxvii, and it is omitted by the best MSS. in cxxii, cxxiv, cxxxi. Solomon's name is omitted in cxxvii in the best MSS. Historical notices are added to xxvii, lxxvi, lxxx, xciii, xcvi, xcvii, cxliii, cxliv, and liturgical or other notices (some of them

will appear in detail in the commentary, cannot be reconciled with the contents and language of the Psalms to which they are prefixed. Many Psalms which bear the name of David assume situations and circumstances wholly unlike any in which he can be supposed to have been placed, or express feelings which it is difficult to attribute to a man of his position and character: some (e.g. lxix) apparently refer to the captivity: some (e.g. lxxxvi, cxliv) are mere compilations: the language of others (e.g. cxxxix) is unquestionably late. In xx, xxi cx, a king is the subject, but he is himself the author. Opinions must differ widely as to the language likely to be used upon a particular occasion, but after every allowance has been made for the difference of modern feeling and for our ignorance of the details of the circumstances of many epochs in David's life, it is in many cases impossible to connect the contents of the Psalms with the occasions named in the titles.

The Psalms of Asaph again cannot all have been written by David's musician Asaph, if indeed any of them were. Some of them refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Exile (lxxiv, lxxix, lxxx); some belong apparently to the post-exilic period.

While however the titles cannot be accepted as giving trustworthy information in regard to the authorship of the Psalms, they are not to be regarded as entirely worthless. The infrequency of their occurrence in the later Books (IV, V) is an indication that they were not the arbitrary conjectures of the latest compilers of the Psalter, and it is reasonable to infer that they rested upon some authority, documentary or traditional.

What then is their value? It seems probable that, in many cases at least, they indicate the source from which the Psalms

obscure) to xxiv, xxix, xxxviii, xl, xlii, xcii, xciv. Jeremiah's name (as well as David's) is prefixed to cxxxvii in some MSS. (not AN), and the names of Haggai and Zechariah or Zechariah only to cxxxviii, cxxxix, cxlvi—cxlviii. Although these additions indicate considerable freedom of treatment in the LXX, it remains that the great majority of the titles in the Hebrew text are attested by the LXX also.

Again it is argued that suspicion is thrown upon the titles by the absence of any names later than the time of David and Solomon. It is no doubt surprising that none of the later Psalmists are mentioned by name, but this fact need not of itself invalidate the titles which are given.

were derived rather than the opinion of the collectors as to their authorship.

In regard to the Psalms of the sons of Korah this is clearly the case. The title *A Psalm of the sons of Korah* cannot mean that the Psalm was composed by a plurality of authors. It must be part of the title of the collection from which these Psalms were derived. Such a collection may have been called, "*The book of the Songs of the sons of Korah*," and have contained Psalms written by members of the guild or family of Korah and preserved in a collection, made probably for liturgical purposes, which bore their name.

Similarly the title *A Psalm of Asaph* may not have been meant to attribute the Psalm to Asaph himself, but may have been intended to indicate that it was taken from a collection preserved and used by the guild or family of Asaph. The collection may have been founded by David's famous musician, though we cannot point to any Psalm in it as even probably written by him, and it still retained the name of its founder, though the main part of it belonged to later times.

In the same way again the title *A Psalm of David* may have been taken over from the general title of the collection from which the Psalm was derived. There appear to have been two 'Davidic' collections: that which forms Book I, and that which was incorporated in the Elohistic collection in Book II. The latter collection may have been called *The Book of the Prayers of David*. Possibly it had some connexion with a historical work, in which the life of David was illustrated by poems, as was often done in the earlier histories: e.g. Judg. v; 1 Sam. ii; 2 Sam. xxii. Now these collections may have been so named from their founder and most eminent poet, although the works of other poets were included in them. Just as in later times the whole Psalter came to be spoken of as the Psalms of David, from its founder and most famous author[1], so in earlier times the smaller collection, of which only the origin and nucleus was due to David, came to bear his name, and when that collection was

[1] We commonly speak of Newman's *Lyra Apostolica*, though five other writers contributed to it.

incorporated in the Psalter, his name was placed at the head of each Psalm taken from it[1].

The case is somewhat different with the Psalms assigned to David in Books IV and V. It is much more probable that some of these titles are due merely to editorial conjecture or inference from the contents. Yet even the compilers of these Books may have found Psalms which are there attributed to David in some earlier collection bearing his name, or assigned to him by current tradition. It is an unwarrantable assumption that all the Davidic Psalms must have been incorporated in earlier collections and inserted in the earlier books.

It is quite possible that imitations of Davidic Psalms, such for example as Ps. lxxvi, may have been called by his name, without the slightest intention of fraud. In 1 Chr. xvi we find a Psalm compiled from other Psalms suggested as an appropriate thanksgiving for the occasion, though it does not appear to be expressly attributed to David[2].

Again, it is possible that Psalms were written by different poets to illustrate particular episodes in the life of David, or to express the thoughts which might be supposed to have been in his mind upon certain occasions. These "dramatic lyrics" might easily have had his name affixed to them, without the slightest intention of passing them off as his for the sake of giving them currency and authority. To this class of Psalm may belong the Psalm of Moses (xc), which can hardly be supposed to have been actually written by him.

While then the titles of the Psalms cannot be supposed to give certain information as to their authors, and many of the Psalms bearing the name of David cannot have been written by him, we are not justified in rejecting the titles as mere arbitrary conjectures. They supply information concerning the earlier stages of the growth of the Psalter; and it is not unreasonable to inquire whether a Psalm taken from a collection which bore David's name may not have been actually composed by him.

In criticising the title of a Psalm and endeavouring to fix its

[1] So the general title of the collection is prefixed to each of the Pilgrimage Psalms (cxx—cxxxii).

[2] See the R.V. of 1 Chr. xvi. 7.

date by the light of its contents much caution is necessary. The possibility of alterations and additions to the original poem must be taken into account. It is probable that many of the Psalms were not at once committed to writing, but like other oriental poetry, were transmitted orally[1]. The comparison of Ps. xviii with 2 Sam. xxii shews that the text has in some cases suffered from accidental errors of transcription, while in others it appears to bear marks of intentional revision. The comparison of Ps. liii with Ps. xiv, of Ps. lxx with Ps. xl. 13 ff., and of Ps. cviii with Pss. lvii and lx. shews that editors did not scruple to alter earlier Psalms, to divide them, and to combine portions of them, for their own special purposes. The anthem inserted by the chronicler in 1 Chr. xvi is a notable example of a composite Psalm. Additions seem to have been made with a view of adapting Psalms for liturgical use. Such processes, which can be definitely traced in some instances, have no doubt been in operation elsewhere[2].

CHAPTER IV.

THE AUTHORSHIP AND AGE OF THE PSALMS.

It is obvious from what has been said in the preceding chapter that great uncertainty must necessarily rest upon the authorship of the Psalms. When once it is admitted, as it must be admitted, that the titles cannot be absolutely relied on, we are launched upon a sea of uncertainty. Internal evidence, whether of thought, or style, or language, is a precarious guide. Many Psalms are of a quite general character: the circumstances of one period often resemble those of another: many of

[1] Arabic poetry was preserved by the *râwîs*, or *reciters*. "The custom of committing verse to writing did not begin till near the end of the first century after the Flight. The whole of the old poetry was preserved by oral tradition only." Lyall's *Ancient Arabian Poetry*, p. xxxv.

[2] Thus e.g. Pss. xix, xxiv, xxvii, xl, lxxvii. cxliv, have with more or less plausibility been regarded as composite Psalms.

the Psalms have doubtless undergone adaptation and modification, and the date of a Psalm must not always be determined by a single word or phrase[1].

Important as it is for the full interpretation of many Psalms to know the circumstances under which they were written, and for the elucidation of the religious history of Israel to determine the age to which they belong, the Psalms as a whole suffer less from this uncertainty than might be expected. Their interest is human and universal. They appeal to the experience of all ages. Still the endeavour must be made to ascertain to what period of the history a Psalm belongs. The question must be considered with reference to each particular Psalm, or group of Psalms, for in those cases in which Psalms are connected by external indications (e.g. by their titles) or by internal resemblances, they must obviously be considered together. The answer must often be *non liquet*: and even when a Psalm appears to be connected with the circumstances of the life of a particular individual or period, the most that can be said is that the Psalm illustrates, or is illustrated by, that life or that period. Thus it is natural to attribute to Jeremiah[2] several Psalms which reflect feelings expressed in his prophecies, or contain language resembling them: and to assign to the age of Ezra and Nehemiah a number of Psalms which seem to have light thrown upon them by the circumstances recorded in their books. But the historical and biographical records of the O.T., if representative, are only fragmentary and partial. Jeremiah was but one of many persecuted saints and prophets. History repeats itself, and circumstances not unlike those described in Ezra and Nehemiah must have recurred in the later period of

[1] The question is often asked by the English reader why language does not determine the date of the books of the O.T. within at any rate comparatively definite limits. But (1) the remains of Hebrew literature of which the date is admitted as certain are too scanty to give much material for forming a judgement: (2) the Massoretic vocalisation, while here and there preserving ancient forms, has obscured distinctions under the uniform pronunciation of a later age: (3) the possibility of the imitation of ancient models in a later age must be taken into account.

[2] See the introductions to Pss. xxii. xxxi, xxxv, xxxviii, xl, lv, lxix, lxxi, lxxxviii.

which we know practically nothing. Many Psalms of course contain no indications whatever of their date. But a Psalm gains in point and reality if we can give it a historical or personal background, though it is unreasonable to assert dogmatically that it must necessarily have been composed by that particular author or under those special circumstances.

We have seen (p. xxxiii) that the titles 'A Psalm of David,' 'A Psalm of Asaph,' 'A Psalm of the sons of Korah' probably indicate the collections from which the Psalms bearing them were derived. But they easily came to be regarded as giving authoritative information about the authorship of the Psalms to which they are prefixed. The view was frequently held in the Jewish Church and was adopted by some of the Christian Fathers, that anonymous Psalms were to be attributed to the poet last named[1]; but in process of time the whole Psalter came to be attributed to David[2].

Modern criticism has gone to the opposite extreme, and is disposed to refer the whole Psalter, or at least the greater part of it, to the period after the return from Babylon. Thus Wellhausen (in Bleek's *Introduction*, p. 507, ed. 1876): "Since the Psalter belongs to the Hagiographa, and is the hymn-book of the congregation of the Second Temple...the question is not whether it contains any post-exilic Psalms, but whether it contains any pre-exilic Psalms." Similarly Reuss (*History of the O.T.* § 282): "Our doubts do not go so far as to deny the possibility of referring a single one of the poems in the present collection of Synagogue hymns to the period of the kingdom. But we have no decisive proofs for such antiquity." In this country Professor Cheyne in his Bampton Lectures for 1889, on *The Origin and Religious Contents of the Psalter in the Light*

[1] So Jerome (Ep. cxl, *ad Cyprianum*) attributes Pss. xci to c to Moses, "hanc habens Scripturæ sacræ consuetudinem, ut omnes Psalmi qui eorum sint titulo non habent his deputentur quorum in prioribus Psalmis nomina continentur."

[2] So R. Meir in the Talmud *Pesachim* 117 *a*; and this view seemed to St Augustine "the more credible" (*de Civ. Dei* xvii. 14). Theodoret accepted it as the general opinion. Even Theodore of Mopsuestia, when he explained seventeen Psalms to refer to the Maccabaean age, did not question that they were written by David, but supposed that he had foretold the future fortunes of his people.

of Old Testament Criticism and the History of Religions, has maintained that the whole Psalter, with the possible exception of parts of Ps. xviii, is post-exilic, belonging mainly to the later Persian and Greek period, and containing a considerable number of Maccabaean Psalms; and that it was finally edited by Simon the Maccabee, c. B.C. 140. Duhm (1900) goes even further, and not only denies that there is a single Psalm which would induce an unprejudiced critic to regard it as pre-exilic, but thinks that it is open to question whether any Psalms are as old as the Persian period, and assigns the majority of them to the century beginning with the Maccabaean troubles and ending with the death of Alexander Jannaeus, B.C. 170—78. The completion and final publication of the Psalter took place, he holds, about B.C. 70.

It is however difficult to believe that these views represent a just estimate of the evidence. Religious poetry certainly existed before the exile. Ps. cxxxvii[1] furnishes explicit evidence that the Israelites carried it with them to Babylon, and that their musical skill was famous there. The 'songs of Zion' which their conquerors bade them sing were 'Jehovah's songs,' sacred songs destined for use in His worship.

The ancient praise-songs of Israel in the Temple are referred to by the prophet of the Exile: "our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee, is burned with fire" (Is. lxiv. 11).

The Book of Lamentations, which, though probably not written by Jeremiah, "portrays in almost every part so lively a recollection of the closing period of the siege and taking of Jerusalem, that at least the greater portion of it can have been written by no one who was not an eye-witness or a younger contemporary of these events[2]," is so thoroughly artificial in style

[1] Professor Cheyne indeed gets rid of the evidence of Ps. cxxxvii by treating it as a "dramatic lyric" written 400 years after the Return in the time of Simon, and therefore not trustworthy evidence (*Origin of the Psalter*, p. 69 f.); but if any Psalm bears upon the face of it clear indications of the time at which it was composed, it is this Psalm. The writer and those for whom he speaks are still smarting under the recollection of the sufferings of the Exile.

[2] Kautzsch, *Literature of the O.T.*, E.T., p. 92.

and form that it may justly be inferred from it that the art of writing sacred poetry had long been cultivated.

Jeremiah (xxxiii. 11) predicts the restoration of the Temple services of thanksgiving[1], and quotes as in familiar use a doxology otherwise known only from post exilic Psalms (cvi. 1, &c.), yet in a form which, by its slight differences from that in the Psalter, shews that it belongs to the prophetic period. "Yet again shall there be heard in this place...the voice of them that say, 'Give thanks to Jehovah of hosts, for Jehovah is good, for His lovingkindness endureth for ever,' as they bring (sacrifices of) thanksgiving into the house of Jehovah." It is moreover evident from passages such as Jer. xx. 7 ff. that he was familiar with the style and language of Psalms resembling those which have come down to us, even if it cannot be proved that he is actually quoting any of them.

A century earlier Isaiah refers to the joyous songs of the Passover festival, and the music with which pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the festival was accompanied (Is. xxx. 29).

Amos (v. 23; cp. viii. 10) alludes to the songs and music of the religious festivals in the Northern kingdom.

The Song of Deborah (Judg. v) is generally acknowledged to be contemporary with the events which it describes, and though it appears to have undergone some expansion, or modification of form, at a later age, the greater part of the Song of Moses in Ex. xv is probably Mosaic[2]; and both of these poems are penetrated by a religious spirit.

Religious poetry existed before the Exile, and there is no *a priori* improbability that the Psalter should contain pre-exilic Psalms. And when we examine the Psalter, we find a number of Psalms which may most naturally be referred to the pre-exilic period.

[1] The reference to the singers' chambers in the Temple in Ezek. xl. 44 cannot be quoted as implying the existence of a Temple choir in Ezekiel's time. The context requires the adoption of the reading of the LXX, *two* (שְׁתַּיִם) for *singers* (שָׁרִים). On the other hand the existence of such a choir is implied by the statement in Ezra ii. 41 (=Neh. vii. 44) that among those who returned from Babylon in B.C. 536 were "the singers, the sons of Asaph."

[2] Driver, *Lit. of O. T.*[6], p. 30.

(*a*) Psalms which contain a definite reference to the king, viz. ii, xviii, xx, xxi, xxviii, xxxiii, xlv, lx, lxii, lxxii, ci, cx, presumably belong to the period of the monarchy. The reference of such Psalms as xx, xxi, lxi, lxiii to Judas or Simon, who studiously avoided the title of king, has to be supported by arbitrary and fanciful exegesis, and by setting aside the ordinary meaning of familiar words. That Pss. xlv and lxxii can refer to a non-Israelite king such as Ptolemy Philadelphus is incredible. 'Jehovah's anointed' in xxviii. 8 cannot, in view of the context, be understood of anyone but the king. The reference to a king in xxxiii. 16, 17 might be quite general, but the omission of any reference to a king in cxlvii, which is clearly based upon it, is significant. The one belongs to the age of the monarchy, the other does not.

(*b*) Pss. xlvi–xlviii, lxxv, lxxvi may far more naturally be referred to the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrians under Sennacherib in B.C. 701 than "at the earliest, to one of the happier parts of the Persian age." They are full of points of contact in thought and expression with the Assyrian prophecies of Isaiah. "The Jewish Church in Isaiah's time was," it is argued, "far too germinal to have sung these expressions of daring monotheism and impassioned love of the temple; and the word *'Elyon* (xlvi. 5; cp. xlvii. 3) as a title for Jehovah never occurs in Isaiah, but frequently in the (probably) later Psalms[1]." It may well be the case that these Psalms soar far above the average belief of the Israelites of the time, but that is no argument against their having been composed by Isaiah or a poet fired with Isaiah's insight and enthusiasm. They contain nothing in advance of Isaiah's theology; and it should be noted that it is not "impassioned love of the temple" which inspires the writer of xlvi and xlviii, but admiring love for the city, which had been so signally delivered; and the motive of these Psalms is in full accord with Isaiah's teaching concerning the inviolability of Zion. The argument from the use of *'Elyon* in Ps. xlvi loses its force when it is observed that it is a poetical word, never used of Jehovah by any of the prophets (see Appendix, Note ii).

[1] Cheyne, *Origin of the Psalter*, p. 164.

An argument from quotations seldom has much weight, for it is often impossible to decide which of two parallel passages is the original, but it seems clear that Lam. ii. 15 combines Ps. xlviii. 2 and Ps. l. 2, and if so, the quotation supports the pre-exilic date of these Psalms.

(c) Ps. l reflects most forcibly the teaching of the great prophetic period, the eighth century, and must be referred to this rather than to any later age.

These are some of the most prominent examples of Psalms which are most naturally and simply assigned to the period of the monarchy. But there are others which may with great probability be referred to the same period, and of those which contain no clear indications of date some at least may be pre-exilic.

But the question still remains to be asked. Can we go further, and carry the origin of the Psalter back to David? It is difficult to believe that the tradition of the Jewish Church was entirely wrong in regarding him as the most eminent religious poet of the nation, and in assigning the foundation of the Psalter to him. That he was a gifted poet is proved by his noble elegy over Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. i. 19 ff.) and his lament for Abner (2 Sam. iii. 33 f.). Though these poems are not directly religious, they shew that the warrior king was capable of the tenderest feelings. Can these have been the only products of his poetical genius? How came it that David was regarded as "the sweet Psalmist of Israel," and that so many Psalms were ascribed to him or at any rate that the earliest collections of Psalms were called by his name, unless he was really a Psalmist, and some at least of these Psalms were actually written by him[1]?

His skill as poet and musician, and his interest in the development of religious music, are attested by the earliest records[2]. Later times pointed to him as the founder of the services of the sanctuary[3]. The leaders of the Return

[1] Comp. Riehm, *Einleitung in das A. T.*, ii. 190.
[2] See 1 Sam. xvi. 17 ff.; xviii. 10; 2 Sam. i. 17 ff.; iii. 33 ff.; vi. 5, 15; xxii. 1; xxiii. 1 ff.; Amos vi. 5.
[3] 2 Chr. xxix. 30.

from the Exile believed themselves to be restoring his institutions[1].

But in particular, the incorporation of Ps. xviii in the Book of Samuel as a specimen of David's poetry illustrating his character and genius is evidence in favour of regarding David as the founder of the Psalter, which cannot lightly be set aside. That Psalm is there circumstantially ascribed to David, and there is no sufficient ground for placing the compilation of the Book of Samuel at so late a date that its evidence on this point can be disregarded as a mere tradition which had sprung up in the course of centuries.

But if Ps. xviii must be acknowledged to be the work of David, important consequences follow. For depth of devotion, simplicity of trust, joyousness of gratitude, and confidence of hope, not less than for its natural force and poetic beauty, that Psalm has few rivals. It has all the freshness of creative genius. It can hardly have been the solitary production of its author. If such a Psalm could have been written by David, so might many others; and it is reasonable to inquire with regard to those which bear his name whether they may not actually have been composed by him.

Both poetry and music existed before David's time, and poetry had been carried to a high development in such compositions as Ex. xv and Judg. v. But with David a new era of religious poetry commenced. The personal element entered into it. It became the instrument of the soul's communion with God. David's natural poetic powers were awakened by his training in the schools of the prophets under Samuel[2]. The manifold vicissitudes of his life gave him an unparalleled depth and variety of experience. Chosen by God to be the founder of the kingdom of promise, he must still pass through trials and persecutions and dangers to the throne. When he had reached the zenith of his fame, he fell through pride and self-reliance, and by sharp chastisement must learn the grievousness of sin. But genius and circumstances alone could not have produced the Psalms. In his "last words" he himself declared,

[1] Ezra iii. 10; Neh. xii. 24, 36, 46.
[2] Comp. Delitzsch, *The Psalms*, Introd. § iii.

"The spirit of Jehovah spake in me,
And his word was upon my tongue."

Unique natural genius, trained and called into action by the discipline of an unique life, must still be quickened and illuminated by the supernal inspiration of the Holy Spirit, before it could strike out the strains, which were to be the pattern and model of religious poetry for all the ages.

It has often been asserted that the David of the Psalms is an entirely different character from the David of history. The devout singer and the rough warrior cannot, it is said[1], be the same person. But a great nature is necessarily many sided; and in early ages it is possible that traits of character which to us seem irreconcilable may co-exist in the same individual[2]. And the difference is often exaggerated. Not a few of the Psalms illustrate and are illustrated by the history of David's life; and in that history, fragmentary and incomplete as it necessarily is, are to be found abundant traces of the religious side of his character; of the confidence which in the midst of danger and difficulty threw itself unperplexed upon God; of the patience which could await God's time instead of rushing to revenge; of the simple faith which ascribed all success and advancement to God; of the hope which looked trustingly forward into the unknown future, in calm assurance that God would fulfil His promises: last but not least, of the penitence which humbled itself in unfeigned sorrow for sin.

It may have been the case, as Delitzsch supposes[3], that the

[1] e.g. by Reuss, *Hist. of O. T.* § 157; Cheyne, *Origin of the Psalter*, p. 211.

[2] The character of Charles the Great presents an interesting parallel. Charles was "a conqueror, a legislator, a founder of social order, a restorer of religion." Yet "his wars were ferocious, and his policy after conquest unsparing." Though there was much of earnestness and intelligence in his religion, "it was not complete or deep enough to exclude that waywardness and inconsistency of moral principle, and that incapacity to control passion, which belonged to the time....His court was full of the gross licentiousness of the period, and he was not superior to it himself." Church, *Beginning of the Middle Ages*, pp. 135 ff. Comp. Bishop Alexander's *Witness of the Psalms to Christ*, p. 89; Davison's *Praises of Israel*, p. 45.

[3] Introd. § iii.

reigns of Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah were marked by fresh outbursts of Psalm poetry. Under both these kings great national deliverances called for fresh expressions of praise and thanksgiving (2 Ch. xx; 2 Kings xviii. ff.). Jehoshaphat exerted himself for the religious education of the country (2 Chr. xvii. 7 ff.): the collection of Proverbs, made under the direction of Hezekiah, attests his interest in literature (Prov. xxv. 1).

A few Psalms date from the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the earlier years of the exile. Some (cp. p. xxxvi) may be from the pen of Jeremiah, who has been credited by some critics with the authorship of a considerable number[1].

With the Return from the Exile Psalmody revived. The harp which had been hung up on the willows of Babylon was strung once more. Fresh hymns were written for the services of the restored Temple[2]. Psalms xcii, xcv–c, the lyrical echo of Is. xl–lxvi, form a noble group of anthems composed in all probability for the Dedication of the Temple in B.C. 516. Other Psalms may reflect the circumstances of the age of Ezra and Nehemiah, and the renewed study of the Law in that period bore fruit in the devout meditations of Ps. cxix.

How long did the Psalter still continue to receive further enrichment? The question has been warmly debated in ancient and modern times, whether any of the Psalms belong to the Maccabaean period. Prophecy was silent (1 Macc. iv. 46, &c.); but must not the great revival of national spirit naturally have found expression in poetry, and do not some of the Psalms clearly refer to the circumstances of that period?

Some critics, as has been mentioned already (p. xxxvii), would

[1] This appears to be due partly to the fact that so much of his personal and inner life is known to us from his autobiography; partly to his familiarity with existing literature and his free use of it, which results in numerous parallels between his prophecies and the Psalms.

[2] Yet some of the Temple Psalms in the later books of the Psalter may have been revivals or adaptations of ancient hymns. An incidental reference in Jer. xxxiii. 11 shows that the doxology, "Give thanks to Jehovah of hosts, for Jehovah is good, for his mercy endureth for ever," was the characteristic formula of thanksgiving before the Captivity. Yet it is found only in the later Books (IV and V) of the Psalter (Ps. c. 4, 5; cvi. 1; &c.), in Psalms which are certainly post-exilic.

refer a considerable number of Psalms, or even the main bulk of the Psalter, to that period, and would bring down the completion of the collection to the reign of John Hyrcanus (B.C. 135—106) or Alexander Jannaeus (B.C. 105—78).

The real question is, however, a much narrower one. The Psalms which have been most confidently and generally referred to the age of the Maccabees are xliv, lxxiv, lxxix, and lx, lxxxiii; with a few others. These are thought to present features which belong to that age, and to no other; e.g. in Ps. xliv the description of the nation as suffering, though it has been faithful to God; in lxxiv the destruction of the synagogues, the profanation of the Temple, and the cessation of prophecy: while the quotation of lxxix. 2, 3 in 1 Macc. vii. 16, 17 with reference to the slaughter of the Assidaeans by the usurping high-priest Alcimus, is supposed to imply that it was written on the occasion of the massacre.

The question is one of exegesis, and a detailed examination of the characteristics of these Psalms must be deferred to the commentary on them. It will then be seen whether they cannot be better referred to the Chaldean or Persian period, or even an earlier time. It has well been pointed out that some distinctive features of the Maccabaean period are conspicuously absent from these Psalms. "They do not contain the slightest trace of those internal divisions of the people which were the most marked features of the Maccabaean struggle. The dangers then were as much from within as from without: and party jealousies brought the divine cause to the greatest peril. It is incredible that a series of Maccabaean Psalms should contain no allusion to a system of enforced idolatry, or to a temporising priesthood, or to a faithless multitude[1]."

The preliminary question may however be discussed here, whether the history of the Psalter and the Canon does not exclude the possibility of such late additions.

(1) As the author of the Book of Chronicles (c. 300 B.C.), in combining portions of Pss. cv, xcvi, cvi for the festal anthem which he introduces on the occasion of the translation of the Ark to

[1] Bp Westcott in Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*, ii. 168.

Zion (1 Chr. xvi. 8 ff.), includes as a part of cvi the doxology which marks the end of the fourth Book, it has been argued that the Psalter must have been already known to him in its five fold division. This is extremely doubtful. This doxology, as will be shewn in the notes to Ps. cvi, differs in character from the doxologies at the close of the first three Books: in all probability it was an original part of the Psalm, not an addition by the collector of the Psalter, and only came in later times to be regarded as marking the division between the fourth and fifth Books. And even if it were to be admitted that a five-fold division of the Psalter then existed, it would not necessarily follow that the Psalter was finally complete, and closed against the admission of fresh Psalms.

(2) More important is the fact that the Psalms which upon internal grounds have most generally and confidently been assigned to the Maccabean period (xliv, lx, lxxiv, lxxix, lxxxiii) are all found in the 'Elohistic' collection. This collection was certainly earlier than the collection contained in Books IV and V, for Ps. cviii consists of portions of two Elohistic Psalms (see p. lv). Moreover some of the supposed Maccabaean Psalms have musical titles, in contrast to the general practice of the last collection. It is exceedingly improbable that a Maccabaean Psalmist would have made his additions Elohistic to correspond with the earlier Psalms, and even furnished his Psalms with titles which no longer had any meaning[1]. And is it conceivable that the LXX translators should have been so entirely at fault as to the meaning of the titles of lx and lxxx, if they were quite recent compositions?

(3) The Greek translator of Ecclesiasticus, writing in Egypt, about B.C. 130, states in his Prologue that his grandfather Jesus the son of Sirach was moved to write the book after diligent study of "the law and the prophets and the other books of our fathers" (*τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων πατρίων βιβλίων*); and pleading for indulgence towards the defects of his own translation he points out that even in the case of "the law

[1] See Robertson Smith, *Old Test. in Jewish Church*[2], pp. 207, 437.

and the prophets and the rest of the books" there is no small difference between the original and a translation.

From these statements it may reasonably be inferred (1) that Jesus the son of Sirach, c. 180 B.C., was acquainted with a three-fold Canon of Scripture, distinguished from other writings: and (2) that a Greek translation of a three-fold Canon was current in Egypt c. 132 B.C. Now "the Greek Psalter...is essentially the same as the Hebrew; there is nothing to suggest that the Greek was first translated from a less complete Psalter and afterwards extended to agree with the received Hebrew. It is therefore reasonable to hold that the Hebrew Psalter was completed and recognised as an authoritative collection long enough before 130 B.C. to allow of its passing to the Hellenistic Jews of Alexandria[1]." Accordingly the closing of the Canon of the Psalter must be placed, at the very latest, in the time of Simon (c. 140 B.C.). John Hyrcanus (B.C. 135—106), Aristobulus I, who assumed the title of king (B.C. 106), and Alexander Jannaeus (B.C. 105—78), are not celebrated in the Psalter. But it seems very doubtful whether a considerably longer interval than ten years ought not to be allowed between the closing of the collection and its currency in a Greek Version; and the evidence next to be adduced makes it extremely probable that the collection was completed at least half a century earlier.

(4) Fresh evidence as to the contents of the Canon of Scripture known to Jesus the son of Sirach has recently been brought to light by the recovery of portions of the Hebrew text of Ecclesiasticus by Dr Schechter and other scholars. In this text ch. li. 12 is followed by a Psalm of fifteen verses, which is unquestionably an imitation of Ps. cxxxv (see Introd. to that Ps.), and is largely composed of phrases taken from Psalms in Book V, e.g. cxxi, cxxxii, cxlvii, cxlviii. In particular, cxlviii. 14 is quoted *verbatim*. If this Psalm was composed by Jesus the son of Sirach c. 180 B.C., it shews that he was familiar with Psalms, some of which have a strong claim to be regarded as among the latest in the Psalter. This is the most striking example, but Dr Schechter holds that the allusions in the

[1] Robertson Smith, *O. T. J. C.* p. 201.

portions of the Hebrew text at present recovered extend over "all the books or groups of the Psalms." Though it is impossible to prove that the Psalter was finally completed by B.C. 180, a strong presumption is raised against the admission of Psalms after that date, and it is highly probable that among "the other books of the fathers" upon the study of which Jesus the son of Sirach based his work was the Psalter substantially as we now have it. In particular it is noteworthy that we have clear evidence for the existence of the last group of Psalms (cxlvi—cl), in which Maccabaean Psalms might most naturally be looked for, and one of which (cxlix) has upon internal grounds the best claim of any Psalm to be regarded as Maccabaean.

(5) The Second Book of Maccabees speaks of the care which Judas took to collect the sacred writings which had been dispersed or lost in the war (2 Macc. ii. 14), but no hint is given that the collection included new works. This book however cannot be regarded as a trustworthy historical authority.

(6) If the *Psalms of Solomon*[2] could be referred to the Maccabaean age, they would afford an almost conclusive proof that the whole of the Psalter belongs to a much earlier time. But it is now generally agreed that this collection belongs to the period after the conquest of Jerusalem by Pompey in B.C. 63, and was completed soon after his death in B.C. 48[3]. Even if the Psalms of Solomon are to be placed at this later date, the argument does not altogether lose its force[4]. For they were written only a century after the standard of independence was raised by

[1] Schechter and Taylor, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, p. 26. "The impression produced by the perusal of Ben Sira's original on the student who is at all familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures is that of reading the work of a post-canonical author, who already knew his Bible and was constantly quoting it."

[2] A collection of 18 Psalms, written in Hebrew, probably in Palestine, but now extant only in a Greek version. The best edition is that of Prof. (now Bp) Kyle and Dr James, with translation and commentary (1891). The text is to be found in Vol. iii of Dr Swete's edition of the LXX (also published separately, with the Greek fragments of Enoch).

[3] See Schürer's *Hist. of the Jewish People in the time of Jesus Christ*, Div. ii. § 32 (Vol. iii. pp. 17 ff., E.T.).

[4] The development of this argument by Bp Westcott in Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*, ii. 168, on the hypothesis of the Maccabaean date of these Psalms, should still be consulted.

Mattathias, and almost immediately after the time at which the Psalter is supposed by some critics to have received its latest additions. But the contrast is immense. They are separated from the Psalter by an impassable gulf. "The spirit which the Psalms breathe is entirely that of Pharisaic Judaism. They are pervaded by an earnest moral tone and a sincere piety. But the righteousness which they preach and the dearth of which they deplore is, all through, the righteousness which consists in complying with all the Pharisaic prescriptions[1]." Their development of the doctrine of the Resurrection and the Messianic expectation separates them widely from the canonical Psalms. Where for example can we find parallels in the Psalter to language like the following with reference to the Resurrection?

"The destruction of the sinner shall be for ever,
and he shall not be remembered, when He visiteth the righteous:
this is the portion of sinners for ever.
But they that fear the Lord shall arise unto life eternal,
and their life shall be in the light of the Lord, and shall fail no more" (iii. 13—16).

"For the Lord will spare His saints,
and their transgressions will He blot out by correction:
for the life of the righteous is for ever,
but sinners shall be carried away to destruction,
and the memorial of them shall no more be found" (xiii. 9, 10).

Equally remarkable is the expression of the Messianic hope:

"Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their king, the son of David,
at the time which Thou knowest, O God,
that he may reign over Israel Thy servant.
And gird him with strength to break in pieces unrighteous rulers" (xvii. 23, 24).

* * * *

[1] Schürer, p. 21.

"And in his days there is no unrighteousness in the midst of them,
for all are holy, and their king is the anointed lord[1]" (*v.* 36).

* * * *

"And he himself is pure from sin, to rule over a great people;
to rebuke rulers and to destroy sinners by the strength of his word.
And he shall not be feeble in his days, relying upon his God,
for God made him mighty in the holy spirit,
and wise in the counsel of understanding, with strength and righteousness" (*vv.* 41, 42).

These general considerations are sufficient taken all together, to make it antecedently doubtful whether any Psalms date from the Maccabaean period, and it seems to be fairly open to question whether the internal characteristics of the supposed Maccabaean Psalms are such as to outweigh these general considerations. The discussion of these special characteristics must necessarily be deferred to the notes on each Psalm. Few modern commentators however deny the possibility, and most maintain the certainty, of the existence of Maccabaean Psalms in the Psalter.

CHAPTER V.

THE OBJECT, COLLECTION, AND GROWTH OF THE PSALTER.

WHAT was the object with which the Psalter was compiled? It is often spoken of as 'the hymn book of the second Temple,' and it is assumed that it was intended for use in public worship. But it has not the appearance of a collection of hymns made exclusively for liturgical purposes, and there is no evidence that it was so used as a whole in the Jewish Church down to the Christian era[2]. Many of the Psalms were no doubt written

[1] *χριστὸς κύριος*: cp. Lam. iv. 20 (LXX), Luke ii. 11.

[2] "The statements of the Rabbis point to the use of certain Psalms on special occasions only; for the use of the whole Psalter in the period to which they refer there is no evidence." Dalman in *Theol. Litztg.* 1893, col. 517.

expressly for use in public worship, either in celebration of particular events, or for general use; and many not written with this special object are well adapted for it. But many were clearly not originally intended for this purpose, and could only be so used by a process of accommodation. Some Psalms are the outpouring of the heart to God in the most intimate personal communion, in supplication, confession, thanksgiving, praise, springing out of the needs and aspirations of the soul in the crises of life, and adapted primarily for private devotion rather than for public worship. Some are of a didactic character, intended for instruction and edification, and to be read or learnt rather than sung. The object of the compilers of the Psalter would seem to have been by no means simply liturgical, but partly to unite and preserve existing collections of religious poetry, partly to provide a book of religious devotion, public and private.

In this connexion a few words may be said upon a question which has recently been much discussed. Who is the speaker in the Psalms? At first sight it may seem to the reader accustomed to modern western modes of thought that it can be no one but the Psalmist himself. But in view of the ancient oriental modes of thought and expression it is at least possible that in many Psalms which seem at first sight to be entirely personal and individual, the speaker is not an individual, but the nation or the godly part of it, the collective 'servant of Jehovah.' Thus in Ps. cxxix Israel speaks as an individual: "Much have they vexed me from my youth up, let Israel now say." Such personification of the nation is not confined to poetry: it is common in the Pentateuch. Israel often speaks or is addressed as an individual, e.g. in Deut. vii. 17 ff.; Ex. xxiii. 20 ff.; Num. vi. 24–26. May not this usage be common in the Psalms? and especially if the Psalter be 'the hymn book of the congregation,' is it not the congregation that speaks? This method of interpretation is no novelty. It is found in the LXX and the Targum, in which Psalms apparently most strongly individual (e.g. xxiii, lvi) are interpreted of the nation; it has been adopted by Christian Fathers and Jewish Rabbis and modern commentators of the most widely different schools

It has been most elaborately developed in recent times by Smend[1], who holds that in few if any of the Psalms is the voice of an individual to be heard. The hostility of enemies so often complained of is really the hostility of neighbouring nations: the sicknesses and sufferings described are those of the body politic. (cp. Is. i. 5 ff.). The theory doubtless contains elements of truth; but it has been pressed to absurd extremes, and it is connected with the mistaken view that the Psalter was designed as a whole to be the hymn book of the congregation, and that the Psalms were written for that purpose. Many of the Psalmists were representative men. They spoke on behalf of the nation, or of some class or body within it. Their vivid consciousness of the 'solidarity' of the nation, of the reality and continuity of national life, enabled them to enter into its hopes and fears, its joys and sufferings, its triumphs and reverses, with a depth of insight and an intensity of sympathy which made them truly the mouthpieces of the community. The true poet enlarges and generalises his own feelings and experiences. Thus Tennyson writes of *In Memoriam*: "'I' is not always the author speaking of himself but the voice of the human race speaking through him[2]." But while the Psalmist speaks in the name of many, he speaks in his own name too. He is not, in the majority of cases at any rate, deliberately substituting the personality of the nation for his own personality. Many Psalms are so intensely personal, that it is impossible to suppose that they did not have their origin in real personal experience; often experience so special and peculiar that it is only by a process of accommodation that it can be used by the congregation. Outside of the Psalter, e.g. in Jeremiah and Nehemiah, language closely resembling that of the Psalter is used by individuals. Moreover the speaker is not seldom distinguished from the congregation. And if the reference of Psalms to the nation is as old as the LXX, the

[1] In the *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Theologie*, 1888, pp. 49 ff. It has also been fully examined and advocated within more reasonable limits by Beer, *Individual- und Gemeindepsalmen*, 1894. See also Cheyne, *Origin of the Psalter*, pp. 261 ff., 276 ff. Robertson Smith, *O. T. J. C.* p. 220. Driver, *Lit. of O.T.*[6] p. 389.

[2] Tennyson's *Life*, i. 305.

reference of them to individuals is still older, for it is implied by the titles, which connect them with events in the life of David. Still, the possibility that the 'I' in the Psalter is collective and not individual must be borne in mind in the interpretation of the Psalms, though to what extent the principle is to be applied will remain debatable. In many Psalms where 'I' and 'we' interchange it may be questioned whether 'I' denotes the nation, or the Psalmist speaking on its behalf as its leader and representative. See e.g. xliv. 4, 6, 15; lx. 9; lxv. 3; lxvi. 13 ff.; lxxiv. 12; lxxxix. 50; xciv. 16 ff.; ciii; cxviii. Some Psalms where the singular alone is used may be national: but to the present writer it seems exceedingly questionable whether such Psalms as li, lvi, lxxi, lxxxviii, cii, cxvi. cxxxix, can be other than personal in their origin and primary application, though they may in use have been appropriated by the whole congregation.

Internal evidence makes it certain that the Psalter grew up gradually from the union of earlier collections of Psalms, and these collections differed widely in character. In some the personal element predominated; in others there were more Psalms referring primarily to events in the national history; in others the liturgical intention is obvious.

The various strata of which the Psalter is composed can to some extent be distinguished. Three principal divisions, marked by well-defined characteristics, may be observed. They appear to have arisen in successive chronological order[1], but such a supposition need not exclude the possibility that the first division received late additions, or that the last division may contain early Psalms. It is an unwarrantable assumption that there can be no pre-exilic Psalms in the third division, because they must all have been included in one of the earlier collections.

(i) The First Division is coextensive with Book I (Pss. i—xli). All the Psalms in it have titles and are described as Psalms "of David," with the exception of i, ii, x, xxxiii. The

[1] It is maintained by Peters (*Development of the Psalter*, in *The New World*, 1893, p. 295) that the Psalms in the appendix to Book III (84—89) and in Books IV and V, which are composed largely of citations from, paraphrases of, or enlargements upon other scriptures, quote only Psalms preceding them in the order of arrangement.

exceptions are easily accounted for. Pss. i and ii are introductory, and probably did not belong to the original collection. Ps. x was either originally part of Ps. ix, or was written as a pendant to it. Ps. xxxiii appears to be of later date, inserted as an illustration of the last verse of Ps. xxxii. This collection may have been made by one editor: it does not appear, like the Second and Third Divisions, to have had collections already existing incorporated in it.

(ii) The Second Division corresponds to Books II and III (Ps. xlii—lxxxix). All the Psalms in it, except xliii (which is really part of xlii) and lxxi, bear titles. It consists of (*a*) seven Psalms (or eight, if xlii and xliii are reckoned separately) "of the sons of Korah" (xlii, xliv—xlix); (*b*) a Psalm "of Asaph" (l): (*c*) twenty Psalms, all except lxvi, lxvii, "of David" (li—lxv): (*d*) an anonymous Psalm (lxxi), and a Psalm "of Solomon" (lxxii)[1]: (*e*) eleven Psalms "of Asaph" (lxxiii—lxxxiii): (*f*) a supplement containing three Psalms "of the sons of Korah" (lxxxiv, lxxxv, lxxxvii); one "of David," which is manifestly a cento from other Psalms (lxxxvi); one "of Heman the Ezrahite" (lxxxviii); and one "of Ethan the Ezrahite" (lxxxix). Thus it appears to have been formed by the union of at least three previously existing collections or of portions of them.

(iii) The Third Division corresponds to Books IV and V (Pss. xc—cl). In this division many Psalms have no title at all, and only a few bear the name of an author. In Book IV, Ps. xc bears the name of Moses: Pss. ci and ciii that of David. In Book V, Pss. cviii—cx, cxxii, cxxiv, cxxxi, cxxxiii,

[1] It has been conjectured by Ewald that Pss. li—lxxii originally stood after xli, so that the arrangement was (1) Davidic Psalms, i—xli; li—lxxii: (2) Levitical Psalms: (*a*) Korahite, xlii—xlix; (*b*) Asaphite, l, lxxiii—lxxxiii; (*c*) Korahite supplement, lxxxiv—lxxxix. The hypothesis is ingenious. It brings the Davidic Psalms together, and makes the note to lxxii. 20 more natural; and it connects the isolated Psalm of Asaph (l) with the rest of the group.

But it is clear that Books II and III formed a collection independent of Book I: and the editor may have wished to separate the mass of the Asaphite Psalms from the Korahite Psalms by placing the Davidic Psalms between them, while he put l next to li on account of the similarity of its teaching on sacrifice. The note to lxxii. 20 is true for his collection; and it does not necessarily imply that none but Davidic Psalms have preceded. Cp. Job xxxi. 40.

cxxxviii—cxlv, bear the name of David: cxxvii that of Solomon. Of the rest the majority have no title, or only that of a subordinate collection, e.g. 'A Song of Ascents,' a collection which probably existed previously in a separate form for the use of pilgrims. Other groups connected by their titles are the groups of 'Davidic' Psalms, cviii—cx, cxxxviii—cxlv; and by contents and form though not by titles, xciii—c, the Psalms beginning with *Hodû* ('O give thanks') cv—cvii, and the Hallelujah Psalms, cxi—cxviii, cxlvi—cl.

We may now proceed to examine the characteristics of these divisions. The greater part of the Second Division is remarkably distinguished from the First and Third by the use of the Divine Names. Psalms xlii—lxxxiii are 'Elohistic'; that is to say, they employ the appellative *Elohim* = 'God,' in the place and almost to the exclusion of the proper name *Jehovah*, represented in the A.V. by LORD.

In Pss. i—xli, *Elohim* occurs absolutely[1] only 15 times, and in some of these cases it is required by the sense[2]. *Jehovah* on the other hand occurs 272 times, or, if titles and doxology are included, 278 times[3].

In Pss. xlii—lxxxiii, the proportion is reversed. *Elohim* occurs 200 times, *Jehovah* only 43 times (exclusive of the doxology, lxxii. 18); while in Pss. lxxxiv—lxxxix *Elohim* occurs only 7 times, *Jehovah* 31 times.

In Pss. xc—cl, *Jehovah* occurs 330 times, while *Elohim* (or the true God) is to be found only in Ps. cviii, which is taken direct from two Psalms in the Elohistic group, and in cxliv. 9, in a Psalm which is evidently compiled from various sources.

It may also be noted that *Adonai* = 'Lord' occurs much more

[1] By 'absolutely' is meant, without either a pronoun attached to it ('my God' and the like) or a qualifying word grammatically connected with it ('God of my righteousness,' 'God of my salvation,' and the like). The English reader must remember that three Hebrew words, *El*, *Eloah*, and *Elohim*, are represented by *God* in the A.V. *El* occurs absolutely 11 times in division i, 19 times in division ii, 2 times in division iii. *Elōah* is rare in the Psalter.

[2] E.g. ix. 17; x. 4, 13; xiv. 1, 2, 5; xxxvi. 1, 7. In iii. 2 the reading is doubtful. See note there.

[3] So Nestle, *Theol. Litztg.* 1896, col. 132.

frequently in the Second Division (31 times), than in the First (10 times), or Third (8 times).

This use of *Elohim* cannot be explained on internal grounds. It stands precisely as *Jehovah* does elsewhere, and not unfrequently the substitution leads to awkwardness of expression. Thus, for example, Ps. l. 7 is taken from Ex. xx. 2; "I am God thy God" is clearly the equivalent of "I am Jehovah thy God"; lxviii. 1, 2, 7, 8 are based upon Num. x. 35; Judg. v. 4, 5, 31; lxxi. 19 is from Ex. xv. 11; and in each case *Elohim* takes the place of *Jehovah*. More striking still is the fact that in two Psalms which are repeated from Book I (liii = xiv; lxx = xl. 13ff.), the alteration is made, though in Ps. lxx *Jehovah* still occurs twice.

To what then is this peculiarity due? Is it characteristic of a particular style of writing? or is it the work of an editor or compiler?

It seems certain (1) from the alteration in Psalms adopted from Book I, (2) from the variety of the sources from which the Psalms in this group are derived, that the change is, in part at least, due to the hand of an editor. It may no doubt have been the usage of certain writers. It has been suggested that it was a custom in the family of Asaph, connected possibly with the musical or liturgical use of the Psalms. But even if the peculiarity was due in some instances to the author, there can be little doubt that, in the group as a whole, it is due to the collector or editor.

It seems clear also that the substitution of *Elohim* for *Jehovah* was not due to the superstitious avoidance of the use of the Sacred Name in later times[1]. The Elohistic collection is by no means the latest part of the Psalter. Books IV and V are composed of Psalms the majority of which are unquestionably of later date than those in the Elohistic group. But in these books the name *Jehovah* is used throughout, with the exceptions noted above. The compiler of Book V knew the Elohistic Psalms in their present form: and so apparently did the com-

[1] The use of *Elōhīm* as a proper name, without the article, must be distinguished from the use of *Elōhīm* with the article (הָאֱלֹהִים) in some of the later books of the O.T., e.g. Chronicles and Ecclesiastes.

piler of Ps. lxxxvi, in the appendix to the Elohistic collection, as may be inferred from a comparison of *v.* 14 with liv. 4 f.

The suggestion has been made that the compiler's object was to shew that the God of Israel was not merely a national God, and to counteract the Jewish spirit of exclusiveness[1]. Another suggestion is that the collection was thus adapted for the use of the exiles and Israelites in the dispersion, with a view to avoid the repetition of the Sacred Name in a heathen land[2]. But no positive result can be arrived at. The relation of the 'Elohistic' Psalms to the 'Elohistic' documents in the Pentateuch[3] is also an obscure question, which needs further investigation.

The argument for the original independence of the three divisions which is derived from the use of the names of God is corroborated:

(*a*) By the repetition in the Second Division of Psalms found in the First, and in the Third of Psalms found in the Second. Thus liii = xiv: lxx = xl. 13 ff.: cviii = lvii. 7—11, lx. 5—12.

(*b*) By the note appended to Ps. lxxii, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended[4]." This note, whether taken over from an earlier collection by the editor of Books II and III, or inserted by him, appears to shew that he knew of no more Davidic Psalms, or at any rate that his collection contained no more. Clearly therefore his collection must have been independent of Books IV and V, which contain several more Psalms ascribed to David.

(*c*) By the difference already noticed in regard to titles. In this respect the Third Division is markedly distinguished from the First and Second. In these the Psalms with but few easily explained exceptions have titles, giving the name of the author or the collection from which the Psalm was taken, in many cases the occasion, and some musical or liturgical description or direction. But in the Third Division the majority of the

[1] Cp. Ottley, *Aspects of the O.T.*, p. 191.

[2] Only in the Temple, according to Jacob (*ZATW*, 1896, p. 158), was the Sacred Name JHVH pronounced.

[3] On these see Driver, *Lit. of O.T.*[6], pp. 116 ff.

[4] Cp. Job xxxi. 40.

Psalms are anonymous; musical and liturgical directions are rare; and titles of the obscure character of many of those in Divisions I and II are entirely absent. Moreover the musical term *Selah*, which occurs 17 times in Division I, and 50 times in Division II, is found but four times in Division III, and then in two Psalms ascribed to David (cxl, cxliii).

(*d*) By the character of the contents of the three divisions. Speaking broadly and generally, the Psalms of the First Division are *personal*, those of the Second, *national*, those of the Third, *liturgical*. There are numerous exceptions, but it is in the First Division that personal prayers and thanksgivings are chiefly to be found: in the Second, prayers in special times of national calamity (xliv, lx, lxxiv, lxxix, lxxx, lxxxiii, lxxxix), and thanksgivings in times of national deliverance (xlvi, xlvii, xlviii, lxxv, lxxvi, lxv—lxvii); in the Third, Psalms of praise and thanksgiving for general use in the Temple services (xcii, xcv—c, cv—cvii, cxi—cxviii, cxx—cxxxvi, cxlvi—cl).

The various steps in the formation of the Psalter may have been somewhat as follows:

(1) An original collection, which bore the name *Psalms* (or, *Prayers*) *of David*, from its first and greatest poet, though poems by other writers were not excluded from it. It has already been suggested (p. xxxii) that the general title of the collection was subsequently transferred to each separate Psalm in the First Group which was taken from it.

(2) The formation of another 'Davidic' collection, and the two Levitical hymnaries belonging to the families of Korah and Asaph.

(3) The 'Elohistic' collection was formed by the union of selections of Levitical Psalms from the Korahite and Asaphite hymnaries with another selection of 'Davidic' Psalms, and 'Elohistically' edited.

(4) To this collection was subsequently added an appendix of Korahite and other Psalms (lxxxiv–lxxxix), which were not altered by the Elohistic editor.

(5) Other collections grew up, perhaps to some extent simultaneously with the preceding stages, and these were united in the Third Division, with a gleaning of earlier Psalms, some of

which were believed to have been written by David, or were taken from a collection bearing his name.

(6) Finally, the various collections were united in the complete Psalter.

The date of these collections cannot be determined with certainty. Reasons have been given (p. xlvii f.) for thinking that the Psalter was practically complete by about 200 B.C.; and Psalms in the Third Division were known to the chronicler a century earlier. The Second Division contains some Psalms of the period of the Monarchy; but others cannot be earlier than the Exile and Return (e.g. lxxxv). Even the First Division was probably not completed in its present form till after the Exile, though the grounds upon which Psalms in Book I are referred to the post-exilic period are less positive and convincing.

The opinion is gaining ground that "the Psalter, in *all* its parts, is a compilation of the post-exilic age[1]," but this does not exclude the possibility that pre-exilic collections of Psalms existed, side by side with prophetic and historical books. Their extent however cannot now be determined[2].

The arrangement of the Psalms in the several books appears to have been determined partly by their arrangement in the smaller collections from which they were taken, where their order may have been fixed by considerations of date and authorship; partly by similarity of character and contents; partly by liturgical usage. Thus for example, we find groups of *Maschil* Psalms (xliii–xlv, lii–lv, lxxxviii, lxxxix), and *Michtam* Psalms (lvi—lx). Resemblance in character may account for the juxtaposition of l and li: xxxiii takes up xxxii. 11: xxxiv and xxxv both speak of 'the angel of Jehovah,' who is mentioned nowhere else in the Psalter. The title of xxxvi links it to xxxv. 27 ('servant of the LORD'): that of lvi may connect it with lv. 6. Pss. cxi—cxviii and cxlv—cl are liturgical groups.

[1] Driver, *Lit. of O.T.*[6], p. 386; cp. Davison, *Praises of Israel*, p. 29.

[2] The statement in 2 Macc. ii. 13 that "Nehemiah founding a library gathered together...the writings of David" (τὰ τοῦ Δαυίδ), may preserve a true tradition that he had some part in the compilation of the Psalter, but what it was is quite uncertain.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FORM OF HEBREW POETRY.

ANCIENT Hebrew poetry possesses neither metre nor rhyme[1]. Its essential characteristic is **rhythm**, which makes itself apparent both in the rhythmical cadence of each separate clause, and in the rhythmical balance of clauses when they are combined in a verse.

The Hebrew language is characterised by a vigorous terseness and power of condensation which cannot be preserved in English. Hence the clauses of Hebrew poetry are as a rule short. They consist sometimes of two words only, most frequently of three words, but not seldom of more than three words.

The rhythm of the clause often reflects the thought which it expresses. Thus, for example, the lively animated rhythm of the opening stanza (*vv.* 1—3 of Ps. ii vividly suggests the tumultuous gathering of the nations; while the stately measure of *v.* 4 presents the contrast of the calm and unmoved majesty of Jehovah enthroned in heaven. Or again, the evening hymn Ps. iv sinks to rest in its concluding verse with a rhythm as reposeful as the assurance which it expresses. A peculiar rhythm known as the *elegiac* or *Qinah* rhythm, in which each line is divided by a *caesura* into two unequal parts, was employed in dirges, and sometimes in other poems. It is found in Lam. i—iv, and occasionally in the Psalter, e.g. in Ps. xlv. 7 ff.

[1] When Philo, Josephus, Eusebius, Jerome, and other early writers, compared Hebrew poetry with Greek and Latin metres, and spoke of hexameters and pentameters, sapphics, or trimeter and tetrameter iambics, they were using familiar language loosely. Various attempts have been made to discover a metrical system in the Psalms, on the basis of quantity, or of number of syllables or accents. Most of them involve the abandonment of the Massoretic vocalisation, and invoke the aid of 'a whole arsenal of licences.' Happily they do not concern the English reader.

Rhyme is found occasionally (e.g. viii. 3 [*Heb.* 4]; cvi. 4—7), but it appears to be accidental rather than intentional, and is never systematically employed. Both rhyme and metre have been used in mediæval and modern Jewish poetry from the 7th cent. A.D. onwards.

The rhythm of clauses however, together with many other features of Hebrew poetry, such as assonance and alliteration, distinctive use of words and constructions, and so forth, chiefly concerns the student of the original. But the rhythmical balance of clauses combined in a verse admits of being reproduced in translation, and can to a large extent be appreciated by the English reader. Owing to this peculiar nature of its form, Hebrew poetry loses less in translation than poetry which depends for much of its charm upon rhymes or metres which cannot be reproduced in another language.

This balanced symmetry of form and sense is known as *parallelism of clauses* (*parallelismus membrorum*) or simply, *parallelism*[1]. It satisfies the love of regular and harmonious movement which is natural to the human mind, and was specially adapted to the primitive method of antiphonal chanting (Ex. xv. 1, 20, 21; 1 Sam. xviii. 7). Such poetry is not sharply distinguished from elevated prose. Many passages in the prophets are written in poetical style, and exhibit the features of parallelism as plainly as any of the Psalms[2].

The law of parallelism in Hebrew poetry has an exegetical value. It can often be appealed to in order to determine the construction or connexion of words, to elucidate the sense, or to decide a doubtful reading. The arrangement of the text in lines, adopted by Dr Scrivener in the standard edition of the A.V. from which the text in this edition is taken, and in the Revised Version, makes this characteristic of Hebrew poetry more plainly perceptible to the English reader.

The various forms of parallelism are generally classified under three principal heads:

(1) *Synonymous parallelism*, when the same fundamental thought is repeated in different words in the second line of a couplet. Thus in Ps. cxiv. 1:

"When Israel went forth out of Egypt,

[1] This fundamental principle of Hebrew poetry had been noticed by earlier writers, but attention was first called to its importance, and its nature was fully examined, by Robert Lowth (1710—1787), Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and afterwards Bishop of London, in his *De sacra Poesi Hebraeorum Praelectiones Academicae Oxonii habitae* (1753).

[2] E.g. Is. lx. 1—3; lxv. 13, 14; Hos. xi. 8, 9; Nah. i. 2.

The house of Jacob from a people of strange language": and the same construction is maintained throughout the Psalm. Every page of the Psalter supplies abundant examples.

(2) *Antithetic* or *contrasted parallelism*, when the thought expressed in the first line of a couplet is corroborated or elucidated by the affirmation of its opposite in the second line. This form of parallelism is specially suited to Gnomic Poetry, and is particularly characteristic of the oldest collection of proverbs in the Book of Proverbs (chaps. x—xxii. 16). Thus for example:

"Every wise woman buildeth her house:
But folly plucketh it down with her own hands" (Prov. xiv. 1).

But it is by no means rare in the Psalms, e.g. i. 6,

"For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous:
But the way of the wicked shall perish."

(3) *Synthetic* or *constructive parallelism*. Under this head are classed the numerous instances in which the two lines of the couplet stand in the relation of cause and consequence, protasis and apodosis, proposition and qualification or supplement, or almost any logical or constructional relation; or in which, as is very frequently the case, the parallelism is one of form only without any logical relation between the clauses. Thus e.g.:

"Yet *I* have set up my king,
Upon Zion my holy mountain" (Ps. ii. 6).

The simplest and most common form of parallelism is the couplet or distich: but this may be expanded into a tristich (triplet) or a tetrastich (quatrain) or even longer combinations, in a variety of ways. Thus the three lines of a verse may be synonymous:

"The floods have lifted up, O Jehovah,
The floods have lifted up their voice;
The floods lift up their din" (Ps. xciii. 3).

Or the first two lines may be synonymous, and the third supplementary, as in Ps. ii. 2:

"The kings of the earth take their stand,
And rulers hold conclave together,
Against Jehovah and against His anointed."

The third line may be antithetic, as in Ps. liv. 3:

"For strangers are risen up against me,
And violent men have sought my life:
They have not set God before their eyes."

Or the first line may be introductory, and the last two synonymous, as in Ps. iii. 7:

"Arise, Jehovah; save me, my God:
For Thou hast smitten all mine enemies on the cheek;
Thou hast shattered the teeth of the wicked."

In a few instances the first line is parallel to the third, and the second is parenthetical, e.g. Ps. iv. 1.

Similarly in tetrastichs (usually including two verses) we find (*a*) four synonymous lines, as in xci. 5, 6. Or (*b*) the first line is parallel to the second, and the third to the fourth, but the second couplet is required to complete the sense; e.g. in Ps. xviii. 15. Or (*c*) the first line may be parallel to the third, the second to the fourth, as in xxvii. 3:

"Though an host should encamp against me,
My heart shall not fear:
Though war should rise against me,
Even then will I be confident."

Or (*d*) the first three lines may be parallel, and the fourth supplementary, as in Ps. i. 3. Or (*e*) the first line may be independent, and the last three parallel, as in Prov. xxiv. 12.

Or two synonymous lines may be contrasted with two synonymous lines, as in xxxvii. 35, 36:

"I have seen the wicked in his terribleness,
And spreading himself like a green tree in its native soil:
And I passed by, and lo! he was not,
Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found."

Even longer combinations than tetrastichs sometimes occur, e.g. in Ps. xxxix. 12; Num. xxiv. 17: and on the other hand single lines are found, for the most part as introductions or conclusions, e.g. in Pss. xviii. 1; cix. 1; cxxx. 1; xcii. 8; Ex. xv. 18. While maintaining its fundamental characteristic of rhythm, Hebrew poetry admits of the greatest freedom and variety of form.

Strophical arrangement. Series of verses are, as might be expected, combined, and many Psalms consist of distinct groups

of verses. Such groups may conveniently be called *stanzas* or *strophes*, but the terms must not be supposed to imply that the same metrical or rhythmical structure recurs in each, as in Greek or Latin poetry. The strophes in a Psalm do not even necessarily consist of the same number of lines or verses.

Such divisions are sometimes clearly marked by a refrain, as in Pss. xlii—xliii, xlvi, lvii: or by alphabetical arrangement, as in cxix: or by *Selah*, denoting probably a musical interlude, as in Pss. iii and iv. But more frequently there is no external mark of the division, though it is clearly indicated by the structure and contents of the Psalm, as in Ps. ii.

Alphabetic or *Acrostic Psalms.*

Eight or nine Psalms[1] present various forms of alphabetic structure (Pss. ix, x, xxv, xxxiv, xxxvii, cxi, cxii, cxix, cxlv). In cxi and cxii each letter begins a line, and the lines are arranged in eight distichs and two tristichs.

In Pss. xxv, xxxiv, cxlv, Prov. xxxi, Lam. iv, each letter begins a distich, in Lam. i, ii, a tristich. In Ps. xxxvii each letter begins a pair of verses, commonly containing four, sometimes five, lines. In Lam. iii each verse in a stanza of three verses, and in Ps. cxix each verse in a stanza of eight verses, begins with the same letter, and the letters are taken in regular succession.

Such an arrangement, artificial though it seems, does not necessarily fetter a poet more than an elaborate metre or rhyme. It is not to be regarded as 'a compensation for the vanished spirit of poetry.' It was probably intended as an aid to memory, and is chiefly employed in Psalms of a proverbial character to connect detached thoughts, or when, as in Ps. cxix and in Lamentations, the poet needs some artificial bond to link together a number of variations upon one theme.

The elaborate development of the system in Lamentations proves that alphabetic structure is not in itself a proof of a very late date[2].

[1] Also Lam. i—iv: Prov. xxxi. 10—31. Traces of alphabetic structure have been pointed out in Nah. i. 2—10: and the original of Ecclesiasticus li. 13—30 was alphabetic. See Schechter and Taylor, *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, pp. lxxvi ff.

[2] The early Roman poet Ennius wrote acrostics (Cicero, *de Divina-*

CHAPTER VII.

THE HEBREW TEXT, THE ANCIENT VERSIONS, AND THE ENGLISH VERSIONS.

1. *The Hebrew Text*[1]. A few words on the character of the Hebrew Text are necessary in order to justify the occasional departures from it, which will be met with in this commentary.

The extant Hebrew MSS. of the O.T. are all comparatively recent. The oldest of which the age is known with certainty is the St Petersburg MS. which is dated A.D. 916[2]; the majority are of the 12th to the 16th centuries. They all present substantially the same text[3], commonly called the Massoretic Text[4]. Thus while we possess MSS. of the N.T. written less than three centuries after the date of the earliest of the books, our oldest MS. of the O.T. is more than ten centuries posterior to the date of the latest of the books which it contains; and while our MSS. of the N.T. present a great variety of readings, those of the O.T. are practically unanimous in supporting the same text.

This uniformity was long supposed to be due to the jealous care with which the Jewish scribes had preserved the sacred

tione, ii. 54, § 111); and they are said to have been invented in Greece by the comedian Epicharmus (B.C. 540—450). We may compare the *alliteration*, which is a common feature of early poetry. Alliterative and acrostic poetry was written in Assyria and Babylonia. See *Proc. Soc. Bibl. Arch.* 1895, p. 131.

[1] For an outline of the history of the Hebrew text see the writer's *Divine Library of the Old Testament*, Lect. iii.

[2] Dr Ginsburg (*Introd. to the Heb. Bible*, p. 489) places an undated MS. in the British Museum somewhat earlier, c. 820—850 A.D.

[3] The variations between them are (roughly speaking) not greater than the variations between the different editions of the A.V. which have appeared since 1611, and they concern for the most part unimportant points of orthography.

[4] *Massōrā* means (1) *tradition* in general: (2) specially, tradition concerning the text of the O.T., and in particular the elaborate system of rules and *memoria technica* by which the later scribes sought to guard the text from corruption. Those who devoted themselves to this study were called 'masters of Massorā,' or 'Massoretes'; and the term 'Massoretic' is applied to the text which their labours were designed to preserve.

text from the earliest times. But careful examination makes it clear that this is not the case. Since the rise of the schools of the 'Massorctes,' in the seventh and eighth centuries A.D., the text has, no doubt, been preserved with scrupulous exactness. But the recension which they adopted, whether originally derived from a single MS., as some suppose, or from a comparison of MSS. held in estimation at the time, unquestionably contains not a few errors, which had crept in during the long course of its previous history[1]. The proof of this lies in the following facts:—

(1) There are many passages in which the Massoretic Text cannot be translated without doing violence to the laws of grammar, or is irreconcilable with the context or with other passages.

(2) Parallel passages (e.g. Ps. xviii and 2 Sam. xxii) differ in such a way as to make it evident that the variations are due partly to accidental mistakes in transcription, partly to intentional revision.

(3) The Ancient Versions represent various readings which in many cases bear a strong stamp of probability, and often lessen or remove the difficulties of the Massoretic Text.

The Massoretic Text as a whole is undoubtedly superior to any of the Ancient Versions: but we are amply justified in calling in the aid of those Versions, and in particular the Septuagint, wherever that text appears to be defective: and even where it is not in itself suspicious, but some of the Ancient Versions offer a different reading, that reading may deserve to be taken into account. In some few cases, where there is reason to

[1] The history of the Hebrew text may be divided into four periods. (1) The first of these periods was marked by the exclusive use of the archaic character: (2) the second, from the time of Ezra to the destruction of Jerusalem, saw the archaic character completely superseded by the square character, as the Hebrew language was superseded by Aramaic: (3) in the third period, from the Fall of Jerusalem to the end of the fifth century, the consonantal text was fixed: (4) in the fourth period, the exegetical tradition of the proper method of reading the text was stereotyped by the addition of the vowels, and an elaborate system of rules was invented to secure the accurate transmission of the text even in the minutest particulars.

suspect corruption anterior to all extant documentary authorities, it may even be allowable to resort to conjectural emendation, and such emendations will occasionally be mentioned.

The accidental corruptions to which all ancient texts were exposed in the process of transmission must of course be carefully distinguished from the intentional alterations to which the Psalms would be especially liable. The original text of a Psalm, like that of the hymns in modern hymn books, was doubtless often altered to adapt it for liturgical use. Archaisms would be modernised: some Psalms would be abbreviated; others would be amplified; in some cases (e.g. 1 Chr. xvi, Ps. cviii) portions of Psalms were combined. A comparison of Ps. xviii with 2 Sam. xxii appears to shew that, exactly as might be expected, peculiar forms were replaced by those in ordinary use, unusual constructions were simplified, archaisms and obscure expressions were explained. The processes which in this instance can be traced doubtless went on elsewhere, though to what extent it is impossible to say.

Two further points must be mentioned here in order to explain some of the notes:

(1) Hebrew, like other Semitic languages, was originally written without any vowels, except such long vowels as were represented by consonants. In the earlier stages of the language even these were sparingly used. The present elaborate system of vowel marks or 'points,' commonly called the 'Massoretic punctuation' or 'vocalisation,' was not reduced to writing until the seventh or eighth century A.D. It stereotyped the pronunciation and reading of the O.T. then current, and in many respects represents a far older tradition. But in a vowelless, or as it is called 'unpointed,' text, many words may be read in different ways, and the Massoretic punctuation does not appear in all cases to give the true way of reading the consonants.

(2) In some passages the traditional method of *reading* (Q'rē) did not agree with the consonants of the *written text* (K'thībh). In such cases the Massoretes did not alter the text, but appended a marginal note, giving the consonants with which the vowels shewn in the text were to be read. It should

be already understood that the *Qrē* or marginal reading is the accepted reading of the Jewish textual tradition. But internal evidence and the evidence of the Ancient Versions, lead us to prefer sometimes the *Qrē* and sometimes the *Kᵉthībh*. See for example Ps. xxiv. 4, where A.V. and R.V. rightly follow the *Kᵉthībh*, and desert the Jewish tradition: or Ps. c. 3, where A.V. unfortunately followed the *Kᵉthībh* and R.V. has happily taken the *Qrē*.

ii. *The Ancient Versions of the O.T.* These possess a fresh interest for the English reader, since the R.V. has given occasional references to them in its margin.

(i) *The Septuagint*[1]. The oldest and most valuable of them is the Greek Version, commonly called the SEPTUAGINT (Sept. or LXX), or Version of the Seventy Elders. It derives its name from the tradition that the translation of the Pentateuch was made by seventy or seventy-two elders, despatched from Jerusalem to Alexandria at the request of Ptolemy Philadelphus (B.C. 285—247). But the 'Letter of Aristeas,' on which this story rests, is undoubtedly a forgery, and all that can be asserted about the origin of the Septuagint is that it was made (1) in Egypt, and probably at Alexandria, (2) at different times and by different hands during the third and second centuries B.C., (3) before the vowel-points had been added to the Hebrew text, or that text had finally taken its present form.

The Pentateuch was probably translated first under the earlier Ptolemies: and the grandson of Jesus the son of Sirach, about 130 B.C., knew and used the version of the Hagiographa as well as of the Law and the Prophets[2]. This, it may be assumed, included the Psalter.

The character of the LXX varies greatly in different parts of the O.T. The work of pioneers in the task of translation, with no aids of grammar and lexicon to help them, naturally presents many imperfections. Yet not seldom it gives a valuable clue to the meaning of obscure words, or suggests certain corrections of

[1] For a full account of the LXX, the Ancient Versions based upon it, and the later Greek Versions, see Swete's admirable *Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (1900).

[2] See above, p. xlvi f.

the Massoretic Text. The version of the Psalter is on the whole fairly good, though it is often altogether at fault in difficult passages, and hopelessly astray as to the purport of the titles. It has a special interest for English readers, because, as will be seen presently, it has, through the Vulgate, indirectly had considerable influence on the version most familiar to many of them.

Unfortunately the Septuagint has not come down to us in its original form. The text has suffered from numerous corruptions and alterations, partly through the carelessness of transcribers, partly through the introduction of fresh renderings intended to harmonise it with the Massoretic Text, or taken from other Greek Versions.

The most important MSS. of the LXX for the Psalter to which reference will occasionally be made, are the following[1]:

The Vatican MS. (denoted by the letter B); a splendid copy of the Greek Bible, written in the fourth century A.D., and now preserved in the Vatican Library at Rome. Ten leaves of the Psalter, containing Pss. cv 27—cxxxvii. 6, are unfortunately lost.

The text of this MS. is given in Dr Swete's edition of the LXX, the *lacuna* in the Psalter being supplied from the Sinaitic MS. (ℵ).

The equally splendid Sinaitic MS. (denoted by the letter ℵ *Aleph*), also written in the fourth century, found by Tischendorf in the convent of St Catharine on Mt Sinai, and now at St Petersburg.

The Alexandrine MS. (denoted by the letter A), written in the middle of the fifth century, brought from Alexandria, and now the great treasure of the British Museum. Nine leaves are wanting in the Psalter (Ps. xlix. 19—lxxix. 10).

The Septuagint, with all its defects, is of the greatest interest and importance to all students of the O.T.

(1) It preserves evidence for the text far more ancient than

[1] For fuller information see Swete's *Introduction*, and his edition of the LXX, published by the Camb. Univ. Press. The Psalter is to be had separately in a convenient form.

that of the oldest Hebrew MS., and often represents a text differing from the Massoretic recension.

(2) It is one of the most ancient helps for ascertaining the meaning of the language of the O.T., and is a valuable supplement to Jewish tradition.

(3) It was the means by which the Greek language was wedded to Hebrew thought, and the way was prepared for the use of that language in the New Testament.

(4) The great majority of the quotations made from the O.T. by the writers of the N.T. are taken from the LXX.

(5) It is the version in which the O.T. was studied by the Fathers of the Eastern Church, and indirectly, in the old Latin Versions made from it, by those of the Western Church, until Jerome's new translation from the Hebrew came into use. In the Psalter its influence was permanent, for as will be seen below (p. lxxii), the new version never superseded the old.

(ii) *The Targum.* After the return from the Babylonian exile, Aramaic, sometimes inaccurately called Chaldee, began to take the place of Hebrew in Palestine. As Hebrew died out, the needs of the people were met by oral translations or paraphrases in Aramaic. Hence arose the Aramaic Versions commonly called the TARGUMS[1]. The Targum of the Psalter is on the whole a fairly good version, though it often assumes the character of a paraphrastic interpretation. In its present form it appears to contain elements as late as the ninth century, but in the main it belongs to a much earlier date. As a rule it represents the Massoretic recension, and is not of much value for textual criticism. It is interesting as preserving interpretations current in the ancient Jewish Church, and in particular, for the reference of several passages in the Psalter to the Messiah[2].

(iii) *The Syriac Version*, known as the *Peshīṭṭā* (*simple* or *literal* version), probably originated at Edessa, about the second century A.D. It was made from the Hebrew, with the help of Jewish converts or actual Jews. But the present text in some parts of the O.T. agrees with the LXX in such a way as to

[1] *Targum* means *interpretation* or *translation*. Cp. *dragoman*, lit. *interpreter*.

[2] See e.g. Ps. xxi. 1, 7; xlv. 2, 7; lxi. 6, 8; lxxii. 1; lxxx. 15.

make it evident either that the original translators consulted that version, or that subsequent revisers introduced renderings from it. This is largely the case in the Psalms[1].

(iv) *The later Greek Versions* require only a brief mention. That of AQUILA of Pontus, a Jewish proselyte from heathenism, was made in the beginning of the second century A.D., when the breach between Church and Synagogue was complete, and the Jews desired an accurate version for purposes of controversy with Christians. It is characterised by a slavish but ingenious literalism.

That of THEODOTION, made towards the end of the second century, or possibly earlier[2], was little more than a revision of the LXX.

That of SYMMACHUS, made probably a little later than that of Theodotion, was also based on the LXX. It aimed at combining accuracy and perspicuity, and was by far the best of the three.

These versions were collected in the gigantic work of ORIGEN (A.D. 185–254) called the HEXAPLA, which contained in six parallel columns, (1) the Hebrew Text, (2) the Hebrew transliterated into Greek letters, (3) Aquila, (4) Symmachus, (5) the LXX, (6) Theodotion. In the Psalter the Hexapla became the Octapla by the addition of two columns containing two more Greek versions known as the 'Fifth' (*Quinta*) and 'Sixth' (*Sexta*).

Unfortunately only fragments of these versions are extant[3]. Generally, though not always, they agree with the Massoretic Text.

(v) *The Latin Versions.* The earliest Latin Version of the

[1] See Wright's *Short History of Syriac Literature*, p. 3.

[2] See Schurer's *Hist. of the Jewish People &c.*, Div. ii. § 23 (Vol. iii. p. 173, E. T.).

[3] Collected with exhaustive completeness in F. Field's *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt*, 1875. But since then fresh discoveries have been made. On some palimpsest leaves brought from the Genizah at Cairo by Dr Schechter some continuous fragments of Aquila's version (including portions of Pss. xxii., xc, xci.) have been discovered: and a fragment of a copy of the Hexapla of the Psalms has come to light in the Ambrosian Library at Milan. See Swete, *Introd.* pp. 34, 62.

O.T., the VETUS LATINA or OLD LATIN, was made in North Africa from the LXX[1]. This version, of which various recensions appear to have been current, was twice revised by ST JEROME (Hieronymus). The first revision, made about A.D. 383, is known as the *Roman Psalter*, probably because it was made at Rome and for the use of the Roman Church at the request of Pope Damasus; the second, made about A.D. 387, is called the *Gallican Psalter*, because the Gallican Churches were the first to adopt it.

Shortly afterwards, about A.D. 389, Jerome commenced his memorable work of translating the O.T. directly from the Hebrew, which occupied him for fourteen years. After bitter opposition and many vicissitudes, it won its way by its intrinsic excellence to be the Bible of the Latin Church, and came to be known as THE VULGATE.

But long familiarity with the Old Latin Version of the Psalter made it impossible to displace it, and the Gallican Psalter is incorporated in the Vulgate in place of Jerome's new translation. That new translation, "iuxta Hebraeos veritatem," never came into general use. It is of great value for the interpretation of the text, and shews that the Hebrew text known to Jerome was in the main the same as the present Massoretic Text.

Accordingly, the student must remember that in the Psalter the Vulgate is an echo of the LXX, and not an independent witness to text or interpretation: while Jerome's translation (referred to as *Jer.*) occupies the place which the Vulgate does in the other books of the O.T.[2]

iii. *The English Versions*[3]. It would be impossible to give here even a sketch of the history of the English Bible. But as the Version with which many readers are most familiar is not that in the Bible, but that in the Prayer-Book, it seems worth while to give a brief account of its origin and characteristics.

As the Old Latin Version held its ground against Jerome's

[1] See Swete, *Introd.* p. 98.

[2] The best edition of Jerome's Psalter with critical apparatus is that by P. de Lagarde, *Psalterium iuxta Hebraeos Hieronymi*, 1874.

[3] See Bishop Westcott, *History of the English Bible*, ed. 2, 1872.

more accurate translation, because constant liturgical use had established it too firmly for it to be displaced, so the older English Version of the Psalter taken from the Great Bible has kept its place in the Prayer-Book, and has never been superseded for devotional use.

The 'Great Bible,' sometimes known as Cromwell's, because the first edition (April 1539) appeared under the auspices of Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's famous minister, sometimes as Cranmer's, because he wrote the preface to the second edition (April 1540), was a revision of Matthew's Bible (1537), executed by Coverdale with the help of Sebastian Münster's Latin version, published in 1534—5[1].

Matthew's Bible was a composite work. The Pentateuch and N.T. were taken from Tyndale's published translation; the books from Ezra to Malachi and the Apocrypha from Coverdale's version; the remaining books from Joshua to 2 Chron. from a translation which there is little reason to doubt was made by Tyndale.

The Psalter in Matthew's Bible was therefore Coverdale's work: and Coverdale's Version (1535) lays no claim to independence. He tells us in the *Epistle unto the Kinges hyghnesse* prefixed to the work, that he had "with a cleare conscience purely and faythfully translated this out of fyve sundry interpreters," and the original title-page described the book as "faithfully and truly translated out of Douche and Latyn into Englishe[2]."

It is not certain who the "fyve sundry interpreters" were; but the 'Douche' included the Swiss-German version known as the Zurich Bible[3] (1524—29), and Luther's version; and among the 'Latyn' translations, beside the Vulgate, was the version of Sanctes Pagninus (1527). It is worth while thus

[1] Münster was largely indebted to the commentaries of mediæval Jewish scholars, especially R. David Kimchi (1160—1235), and their influence is constantly to be traced in the English Versions.

[2] For a full account of Coverdale's work see Bp Westcott's *History of the English Bible*, chap. iii.

[3] So called, because it was the work of a band of scholars at Zurich, including Zwingli, Pellican, and Leo Juda. Coverdale's indebtedness to this version in the Psalter is very large.

to trace the pedigree of the Prayer-Book Version, for in spite of successive revisions, it retains many marks of its origin. Many of its peculiar renderings, and in particular the additions which it contains, are derived from the LXX through the Vulgate.

In the Great Bible these additions were clearly distinguished by being printed in smaller type, and enclosed in brackets. Thus e.g. in Ps. xiv, *no not one* (*v.* 2), *even where no fear was* (*v.* 9), and the whole of *vv.* 5—7, are in smaller type: and in xxix. 1, *bring yong rammes unto the Lorde*. These distinctions were retained in the Standard Prayer-Book of 1662 (the so-called *Annexed Book*), but have been dropped in modern editions.

The Prayer-Book Psalter appears to be a reproduction, not critically exact, of the last revision of the Great Bible (Nov. 1540)[1]. The text differs in a considerable number of passages[2] from that of 1539[3].

The A.V. of 1611, though more accurate, is less melodious, and when, at the revision of the Prayer-Book in 1662, the version of 1611 was substituted in the Epistles and Gospels the old Psalter was left untouched. "The choirs and congregations had grown familiar with it, and it was felt to be smoother and more easy to sing." Coverdale was a consummate master of melodious prose: and the "exquisite rhythm, graceful freedom of rendering, and endeavour to represent the spirit as well as the letter of the original" have justly given to his work "the pre-eminent distinction of being the version through which the Psalms as an instrument of devotional exercise, as an aid to meditation and the religious habit of mind, and as a formative influence in the spiritual education of man, now live in their fullest and widest use[4]."

[1] Bp Westcott, *The Paragraph Psalter*, p. xi.

[2] See examples in Driver, *The Parallel Psalter*, p. xv. Some interesting archaisms disappeared in the revision: e.g. *loore* for *praise* (Ps. cvii. 32); *sparsed* for *dispersed* (cxii. 9). See Driver, p. xvii.

[3] This is easily accessible in Prof. Earle's reprint, with introduction and notes, *The Psalter of* 1539, *a Landmark in English Literature* (1892).

[4] Earle, p. vi.

The Revised Version of 1885 has made a great advance upon the A.V. in respect of accuracy of rendering. The changes made by the Revisers will, as a rule, be quoted in this commentary, but the translation must be read and studied as a whole in order properly to appreciate their force and value. Even with the help which the R.V. now supplies to the English reader, it does not seem superfluous to endeavour by more exact renderings to bring the student closer to the sense of the original.

It is well known that the A.V. frequently creates artificial distinctions by different renderings of the same word, and ignores real distinctions by giving the same rendering for different words: and this, though to a far less extent, is still the case in the R.V.[1] Rigid uniformity of rendering may be misleading, but it is well that attention should be called to distinctions where they exist. Again, the precise force of a tense, or the exact emphasis of the original, cannot always be given without some circumlocution which would be clumsy in a version intended for general use: but it is worth while to attempt to express finer shades of meaning in a commentary.

The best translation cannot always adequately represent the original: and it is well that the English reader should be reminded that the sense cannot always be determined with precision, and may often best be realised by approaching it from different sides.

[1] See, for example, iii. 2. 7. 8, where the connexion is obscured by the rendering of the same word *help* in *v.* 2, and *salvation* in *v.* 8. Two entirely different words are rendered *Heaven* in xlv. 1, 13. The first expresses congratulation (*Happy* ... cp. *he made happy* in *v.* 2): the second expresses the tribute of human reverence to the divine majesty. The word rendered *trust* or *put trust in* in vii. 1, xi. 1 is quite distinct from the word similarly rendered in xvii. 5. It means *to take refuge in*, and the sense gains remarkably by the correct rendering. The exact rendering of a tense may be sufficient to draw a forcible picture, as in vii. 15. For some excellent remarks upon principles of translation see Driver, *The Parallel Psalter*, pp. xxv ff.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MESSIANIC HOPE.

Poetry was the handmaid of Prophecy in preparing the way for the coming of Christ. Prophetic ideas are taken up, developed, pressed to their full consequences, with the boldness and enthusiasm of inspired imagination. The constant use of the Psalms for devotion and worship familiarised the people with them. Expectation was aroused and kept alive. Hope became part of the national life. Even Psalms, which were not felt beforehand to speak of Him Who was to come, contributed to mould the temper of mind which was prepared to receive Him when He came in form and fashion far other than that which popular hopes had anticipated; and they were recognised in the event as pointing forward to Him. Cp. Lk. i, ii.

This work of preparation went forward along several distinct lines, some of which are seen to converge or meet even in the O.T., while others were only harmonised by the fulfilment. Thus (1) some Psalms pointed forward to the Messiah as Son of God and King and Priest: others (2) prepared the way for the suffering Redeemer: others (3) only find their full meaning in the perfect Son of Man: others (4) foretell the Advent of Jehovah Himself to judge and redeem.

All these different lines of thought combined to prepare the way for Christ: but it must be remembered that the preparation was in great measure silent and unconscious. It is difficult for us who read the O.T. in the light of its fulfilment to realise how dim and vague and incomplete the Messianic Hope must have been, until the Coming of Christ revealed the divine purpose, and enabled men to recognise how through long ages God had been preparing for its consummation.

(1) *The Royal Messiah* (Psalms ii, xviii, xx, xxi, xlv, lxi, lxxii, lxxxix, cx, cxxxii).

The Kingdom of Israel was at once the expression of God's purpose to establish an universal kingdom upon earth, and the means for the accomplishment of that purpose. The people of Israel was Jehovah's son, His firstborn (Ex. iv. 22, 23; Deut. xxxii.

6; Hos. xi. 1), and His servant (Is. xli. 8); and the Davidic king as the representative of the nation was Jehovah's son. His first-born (2 Sam. vii. 14; Ps. ii. 7; lxxxix. 26, 27), and His servant (2 Sam. vii. 5 ff.). He was no absolute despot, reigning in His own right, but the 'Anointed of Jehovah' who was the true King of Israel, appointed by Him as His viceroy and representative (Ps. ii. 6). He was said to "sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel" (1 Chr. xxviii. 5), or even "on the throne of the LORD" (1 Chr. xxix. 23; 2 Chr. ix. 8).

Thus he was at once the representative of the people before Jehovah, and the representative of Jehovah before the people, and before the nations. To Him as Jehovah's viceroy was promised the sovereignty over the nations. Nathan's message to David (2 Sam. vii.) was the Davidic king's patent of adoption and title deed of inheritance. It was the proclamation of "the everlasting covenant" which God made with the house of David (2 Sam. xxiii. 5). Upon the divine choice of David and his house, and in particular upon this great prophecy, are based a series of what may be called *Royal Psalms*. Critical events in the life of David or later kings, or in the history of the kingdom, gave occasion to David himself, or other poet-seers, to declare the full significance and extent of that promise. Successive kings might fail to realise their rightful prerogatives, but the divine promise remained unrevoked, waiting for one who could claim its fulfilment in all its grandeur.

Different aspects of the promise are presented in different Psalms. They can only be briefly summarised here: for fuller explanation reference must be made to the introductions and notes to each Psalm.

In Ps. ii the prominent thought is the divine sonship of the anointed king and its significance. The nations are mustering with intent to renounce their allegiance to the king recently enthroned in Zion. But their purpose is vain, for the king is none other than Jehovah's Son and representative. In rebelling against him they are rebelling against Jehovah, and if they persist, will do it to their own destruction.

In David's great thanksgiving (Ps. xviii) he celebrates Jehovah

as the giver of victory, and recognises that his position as "the head of the nations" (*v.* 43) has been given him in order that he may proclaim Jehovah's glory among them (*v.* 49).

The relation of the king to Jehovah as His anointed representative is the ground of intercession and confidence in Ps. xx. 6; and the thanksgiving for victory which follows in Ps. xxi naturally dwells upon the high dignity which belongs to him in virtue of that relation, and anticipates his future triumphs. The same thought is repeated in Ps. lxi. 6 f.

Ps. xlv is a marriage song for Solomon or some later king of the house of David. In lofty language the poet sets before him the ideal of his office (cp. 2 Sam. xxiii. 3 ff.), and claims for him the fulness of the promise of eternal dominion. The union with a foreign princess suggests the hope of the peaceful union of all nations in harmonious fellowship with Israel.

Ps. lxxii is an intercession for Solomon or some other king on his accession. In glowing colours it depicts the ideal of his office, and prays that he may fulfil it as the righteous sovereign who redresses wrong, and may rule over a world-wide empire, receiving the willing homage of the nations to his virtue, and proving himself the heir of the patriarchal promise.

In some crisis of national disaster the author of Ps. lxxxix recites the promise to David, and contrasting its brilliant hopes with the disappointment which it was his trial to witness, pleads for the renewal of God's favour.

Ps. cx is a kind of solemn oracle. It describes David as king, priest, and conqueror. Jehovah adopts him as His assessor, placing him in the seat of honour at His side. Though not of Aaron's line he is invested with a priestly dignity. The new king of Zion must inherit all the privileges of the ancient king of Salem, and enter upon the religious as well as the civil memories of his capital.

Once more, in Ps. cxxxii, possibly in days when the kingdom had ceased to exist, and the representative of the house of David was only a governor appointed by a foreign conqueror, the ancient promise is pleaded in confidence that it must still find fulfilment.

These Psalms refer primarily to the circumstances of the

time. The revolt of the nations, the royal marriage, the accession of a prince of unique promise, the installation of the king, gave the inspired poets opportunity for dwelling on the promises and hopes connected with the Davidic kingdom. But successive princes of David's line failed to fulfil their high destiny, to subdue the nations, to rule the world in righteousness, to establish a permanent dynasty. The kingdom ceased to exist; yet it was felt that the divine promise could not fail; and hope was directed to the future. Men were led to see that the divine promise had not been frustrated but postponed, and to look for the coming of One who should 'fulfil' the utmost that had been spoken of Israel's king[1].

(2) *The suffering Messiah* (Pss. xxii, lxix, cix, xxxv, xli, lv). Men's minds had to be prepared not only for a triumphant King, but for a suffering Saviour. The great prophecy of Is. lii, liii finds preludes and echoes in the Psalter in what may be called the *Passion Psalms*. The sufferings of David and other saints of the old dispensation were typical: they helped to familiarise men with the thought of the righteous suffering for God's sake, of suffering as the path to victory, of glory to be won for God and deliverance for man through suffering. They were the anticipation, as the sufferings of the members of the Christian Church are the supplement (Col. i. 24), of the afflictions of Christ.

But not only were these sufferings in themselves typical, but the records of them were so moulded by the Spirit of God as to prefigure the sufferings of Christ even in circumstantial details. These details are not the most important part of the type or prophecy; but they serve to arrest attention, and direct it to the essential idea.

These Psalms do not appear to have been applied to the Messiah in the Jewish Church as the Royal Psalms were. It was Christ Himself who first shewed His disciples that He must gather up into Himself and fulfil the manifold experiences of the people of God, in suffering as well as in triumph, and taught them to recognise that those sufferings had been foreor-

[1] For references to the Messianic interpretations of the Targums see note on p. lxx.

damned in the divine purpose and how they had been foreshadowed throughout the Old Testament.

Ps. xxii stands by itself among these Psalms. In its description of the Psalmist's sufferings, and in its joyous anticipation of the coming extension of Jehovah's kingdom, it foreshadows the Passion of Christ and its glorious fruits: and our Lord's use of the opening words (and probably of the whole Psalm) upon the Cross, stamps it as applicable to and fulfilled in Him.

Ps. lxix records the sufferings of one who was persecuted for God's sake (*vv.* 7 ff.). In his consuming zeal for God's house, in his suffering as the victim of causeless hatred (cp. xxxv. 19; cix. 3 ff.), in his endurance of reproach for his faithfulness to God, he was the prototype of Christ. The contemptuous mockery (*vv.* 12, 20) and maltreatment (*vv.* 21, 26) to which he was exposed, prefigured the actual sufferings of Christ. The curse which falls upon his persecutors (*v.* 25; cp. cix. 8) becomes the doom of the arch-traitor (Acts i. 20); and the judgement invoked upon his enemies (*vv.* 22–24) finds its fulfilment in the rejection of apostate Israel (Rom. xi. 9, 10).

The treachery of the faithless friend described in xli. 9 (cp. lv. 12 ff.) anticipates the treachery of the false disciple.

(3) *The Son of Man* (Pss. viii. xvi. xl). Psalms which describe the true destiny of man, the issue of perfect fellowship with God, the ideal of complete obedience, unmistakably point forward to Him who as the representative of man triumphed where man had failed.

Ps. viii looks away from the Fall and its fatal consequences to man's nature, position, and destiny in the purpose of God. Christ's perfect humanity answered to that ideal, and is seen to be the pledge of the fulfilment of the divine purpose for the whole race of mankind (Heb. ii. 6 ff.).

In Ps. xvi faith and hope triumph over the fear of death in the consciousness of fellowship with God. Yet the Psalmist did not escape death; his words looked forward, and first found their adequate realisation in the Resurrection of Christ (Acts ii. 25 ff.; xiii. 35).

In Ps. xl the Psalmist professes his desire to prove his gratitude to God by offering the sacrifice of obedience. But that

obedience was at best imperfect. His words must wait to receive their full accomplishment in the perfect obedience of Christ (Heb. x. 5 ff.).

Christ as the perfect Teacher adopted and 'fulfilled' the methods of the teachers of the old dispensation (Ps. lxxviii. 1).

(4) *The coming of God.* Another series of Psalms describes or anticipates the Advent of Jehovah Himself to judge and to redeem. Such are xviii. 7 ff., l, lxviii, xcvi—xcviii. They correspond to the prophetic idea of 'the day of Jehovah,' which culminates in Mal. iii. 1 ff. They do not indeed predict the Incarnation, but they served to prepare men's minds for the direct personal intervention of God which was to be realised in the Incarnation. We find passages originally spoken of Jehovah applied in the N.T. to Christ[1]. The words of Ps. lxviii. 18, which describe the triumphant ascent of Jehovah to His throne after the subjugation of the world, are adapted and applied to the triumphant return of Christ to heaven and His distribution of the gifts of grace (Eph. iv. 8).

The words of cii. 25, 26, contrasting the immutability of the Creator with the mutability of created things, originally addressed to Jehovah by the exile who appealed to Him to intervene on behalf of Zion, are applied to the Son through whom the worlds were made (Hebr. i. 10).

Thus the inspired poetry of the Psalter, viewing the Davidic kingdom in the light of the prophetic promises attached to it, played its part in preparing men's minds for a King who should be God's Son and representative, as it came to be interpreted in the course of history through failure and disappointment. The record of the Psalmists' own sufferings helped to give some insight into the part which suffering must perform in the redemption of the world. Their ideals of man's destiny and duty implied the hope of the coming of One who should perfectly fulfil them. The expectation of Jehovah's advent to judge and redeem anticipated a direct divine interposition for the establishment of the divine kingdom in the world.

It is not to be supposed that the relation of these various elements of the preparation could be recognised, or that they

[1] See Bp Westcott's *Hebrews*, p. 89.

could be harmonised into one consistent picture beforehand. It was reserved for the event to shew that the various lines of hope and teaching were not parallel but convergent, meeting in the Person and Work of Him Who is at once God and Man, Son and Servant, Priest and King, Sufferer and Victor.

It has been assumed thus far that these Psalms refer primarily to the circumstances under which they were written. Many commentators however regard some of the 'Royal Psalms,' in particular Pss. ii, xlv, lxxii, cx, as direct prophecies of the Messianic King: some, because they are unable to discover the precise historical occasion in existing records: others, because the language seems to reach beyond what could be predicated of any earthly king, and the N. T. application of these Psalms to Christ appears to them to require that they should be referred to Him alone.

The particular historical reference of each of these Psalms will be discussed in the introduction to it: here it must suffice to observe that such Psalms as ii and xlv produce the decided impression that they were written in view of contemporary events. Lofty as is the language used, it is no more than is warranted by the grandeur of the divine promises to the house of David; and if the words are applied to Christ with a fulness and directness which seems to exclude any lower meaning, it must be remembered that it was through the institution of the kingdom that men were taught to look for Him, and their fulfilment in Him presumes rather than excludes the view that they had a true, if partial, meaning for the time at which they were written.

Similarly in the case of the 'Passion Psalms' it has been thought that, at least in Ps. xxii, the Psalmist is speaking in the person of Christ. Yet even this Psalm plainly springs out of personal suffering; though it is equally plain that the character of that suffering was providentially moulded to be a type, and the record of it inspired by the Holy Spirit to be a prophecy, of the sufferings of Christ. That Ps. lxix cannot as a whole be placed in the mouth of Christ is evident, if for no other reason, from the confession of sin in *v.* 5.

Have then these Psalms, has prophecy in general, a 'double

sense?' a primary historical sense in relation to the circumstances under which they were written, and a secondary typical or prophetical sense, in which they came to be understood by the Jewish and afterwards by the Christian Church? We may no doubt legitimately talk of a 'double sense,' if what we mean is that Psalmist and Prophet did not realise the full meaning of their words, and that that meaning only came to be understood as it was unfolded by the course of history. But is it not a truer view to regard both senses as essentially one? The institutions of Israel and the discipline of the saints of old were designed to express the divine purpose as the age and the people were able to receive it. The divine purpose is eternally one and the same, though it must be gradually revealed to man, and man's apprehension of it changes. And it is involved in any worthy conception of inspiration that inspired words should express divine ideas with a fulness which cannot at once be intelligible, but only comes to be understood as it is interpreted by the course of history or illuminated by the light of fuller revelation.

Inspired words are "springing and germinant" in their very nature: they grow with the growing mind of man. They are 'fulfilled,' not in the sense that their meaning is exhausted and their function accomplished, but in the sense that they are enlarged, expanded, ennobled. What is temporary and accidental falls away, and the eternal truth shines forth in its inexhaustible freshness and grandeur.

For us the Psalms which were designed to prepare the way for the coming of Christ bear witness to the unity of the divine plan which is being wrought out through successive ages of the world.

(5) *The nations.* Under the head of Messianic Hope in the Psalter must be included the view which is presented of the relation of the nations to Jehovah and to Israel. Few features are more striking than the constant anticipation of the inclusion of all nations in Jehovah's kingdom.

On the one hand indeed the nations appear as the deadly enemies of Jehovah's people, leagued together for its destruction (ii, lxxxiii), but doomed themselves to be destroyed if they

persist in their unhallowed purpose (ii. 9; ix. 17 ff.; xxxiii. 10; xlvi. 6 ff.; lix. 5, 8).

But concurrently with this view of the relation of the nations to Jehovah and Israel, another and more hopeful view is constantly presented. The nations as well as Israel belong to Jehovah, and are the objects of His care; they will eventually render Him homage; and Israel is to be the instrument for accomplishing this purpose and establishing the universal divine kingdom.

(*a*) The earth and all its inhabitants belong to Jehovah as their Creator (xxiv. 1; cp. viii. 1); they are under His observation (lxvi. 7), and subservient to His purposes xxxiii. 14); He disciplines and teaches them (xciv. 10); they are addressed as being capable of moral instruction (xlix. 1).

He is the supreme and universal King and Judge (xxii. 28; xlvi. 10; xlvii. 2, 8, 9; xcvi. 13; xcvii. 9; xcix. 2; cxiii. 4); the nations are constantly exhorted to render Him homage (ii. 8 ff.), to fear Him (xxxiii. 8), to praise Him (lxvi. 1 f.; cxvii. 1; cxlv. 21), and even to worship Him in His temple (xcvi. 7 ff.; c. 1, 2).

(*b*) The time will come when all nations will acknowledge His sovereignty (xxii. 27; lxvi. 4; lxviii. 29 ff.; lxxxvi. 9; cii. 22). The kings of the earth will render homage to their sovereign (cii. 15; cxxxviii. 4). To Him as the hearer of prayer shall "all flesh" come (lxv. 2); He is the confidence of all the ends of the earth (lxv. 5); and the Psalter ends with the chorus of universal praise from every living thing (cl. 6).

(*c*) Israel is Jehovah's instrument for accomplishing the world-wide extension of His kingdom.

In the early days of the kingdom it may have seemed that Israel's destiny was to subjugate the nations and include them in the kingdom of Jehovah by conquest (ii; xviii. 43; xlvii); yet the thought is never far distant that the object of Israel's victories is to make Jehovah known (xviii. 49; lvii. 9), and to lead to the harmonious union of the nations with His people (xlvii. 9). Ps. xlv suggests the hope of peaceful alliance, Ps. lxxii of conquest by moral supremacy (*cp.* 8 ff.). If to the last the thought of actual conquests survived (cxlix. 6 ff.), a more spiritual conception of Israel's relation to the nations grew up

side by side with it. The Psalmist's gratitude for personal deliverance widens out into the prospect of the universal worship of Jehovah (xxii). Ps. lxvii expresses Israel's consciousness of its calling to be a blessing to the world, and the final purpose of its prosperity is the conversion of the nations. Zion becomes the spiritual metropolis in which nations once hostile are enrolled as citizens (lxxxvii); and Israel's deliverance from captivity is seen to lead to the universal worship of her Deliverer, and the gathering of the nations to Zion to serve Him (cii. 15, 21 ff.; cp. xcvi—xcviii).

Thus, even under the limitations of the old Covenant, were formed the hopes which are in part fulfilled, and in part still await fulfilment, in the Christian Church.

CHAPTER IX.

ON SOME POINTS IN THE THEOLOGY OF THE PSALMS.

A thorough examination of the Theology of the Psalms would exceed the limits of the present work. It would include an investigation whether any progress and development of doctrine can be traced in the Psalms of different periods. All that can be attempted here is a few brief notes on some points which require the student's attention or present special difficulties.

(i) *The relation of the Psalms to the Ordinances of Worship.* The Psalms represent the inward and spiritual side of the religion of Israel. They are the manifold expression of the intense devotion of pious souls to God, of the feelings of trust and hope and love which reach a climax in such Psalms as xxiii, xlii—xliii, lxiii, lxxxiv. They are the many-toned voice of prayer in the widest sense, as the soul's address to God in confession, petition, intercession, meditation, thanksgiving, praise, both in public and private. They offer the most complete proof, if proof were needed, how utterly false is the notion that the religion of Israel was a formal system of external rites and ceremonies. In such a book frequent reference to the external ordinances of worship is scarcely to be expected: but they are presumed,

and the experience of God's favour is constantly connected with the Sanctuary and its acts of worship[1].

There are frequent references to *the Temple* as the central place of worship, where men appear before God, and where He specially reveals His power glory and goodness, and interprets the ways of His Providence (xlii. 2; xlviii. 9; lxiii. 2; lxv. 4; lxviii. 29; lxxiii. 17; xcvi. 6 ff.; &c.).

The impressive splendour of the priestly array is alluded to (xxix. 2, note; xcvi. 9; cx. 3).

The delight of the festal pilgrimages to Zion is vividly described (xlii, xliii, lxxxiv, cxxii, cp. lv. 14). Consuming zeal for God's house in a corrupt age characterised the saint and exposed him to persecution (lxix. 9).

The joyous character of the O. T. worship is so striking a feature of the Psalter as scarcely to need special notice. The Psalter as the hymn-book of the Second Temple was entitled 'The Book of Praises.' We hear the jubilant songs of the troops of pilgrims (xlii. 4; cp. Is. xxx. 29): we see the processions to the Temple with minstrels and singers (lxviii. 24, 25): we hear its courts resound with shouts of praise (xcv. 1 ff.; c. 1, 4), and music of harp and psaltery, timbrel and trumpet, cymbals and pipe (cl.).

Sacrifice is referred to as the sanction of the covenant between God and His people (l. 5; cp. Ex. xxiv. 5 ff.); as the regular accompaniment of approach to God (xx. 3; l. 8 ff.; lxvi. 13, 15; xcvi. 8); as the natural expression of gratitude (xxvii. 6; xliii. 4; li. 19; liv. 6; cvii. 22; cxvi. 17; cxviii. 27), especially in connexion with vows (lvi. 12; lxvi. 13 ff.), which are frequently mentioned (xxii. 25; lxi. 5, 8; lxv. 1; lxxvi. 11; cxvi. 14, 18). The Levitical ceremonies of purification are alluded to as symbols of the inward cleansing which must be effected by God Himself (li. 7).

But the great prophetic doctrine[2] of the intrinsic worthlessness of sacrifice apart from the disposition of the worshipper is emphatically laid down. It is not sacrifice but obedience that

[1] Cp. Oehler, *O. T. Theology*, § 201.

[2] From 1 Sam. xv. 22 onwards. See Amos v. 21 ff.; Hos. vi. 6; Is. i. 11 ff.; Mic. vi. 6 ff.; Jer. vi. 20; vii. 21 ff.; xiv. 12.

God desires (xl. 6 ff.); it is not thank-offering, but a thankful heart which finds acceptance with Him (l. 14, 23; cp. lxix. 30, 31); it is not sacrifice, but contrition which is the condition of forgiveness (li. 16 ff.). Penitence and prayer are true sacrifices (li. 17; cxli. 2): and the moral conditions which can alone make sacrifice acceptable and are requisite for approach to God are constantly insisted upon (iv. 5; xv. 1 ff.; xxiv. 3 ff.; xxvi. 6; lxvi. 18).

It is God Himself who 'purges away' iniquity (lxv. 3; lxxviii. 38; lxxix. 9; lxxxv. 2).

(ii) *The self-righteousness of the Psalmists.* Readers of the Psalms are sometimes startled by assertions of integrity and innocence which appear to indicate a spirit of self-righteousness and self-satisfaction approximating to that of the Pharisee (Luke xviii. 9). Thus David appeals to be judged according to his righteousness and his integrity (vii. 8; cp. xxvi. 1 ff.), and regards his deliverance from his enemies as the reward of his righteousness and innocence (xviii. 20 ff.); sincerity and innocence are urged as grounds of answer to prayer (xvii. 1 ff.), and God's most searching scrutiny is invited (xxvi. 2 ff.).

Some of these utterances are no more than asseverations that the speaker is innocent of particular crimes laid to his charge by his enemies (vii. 3 ff.); others are general professions of purity of purpose and single-hearted devotion to God (xvii. 1 ff.). They are not to be compared with the self-complacency of the Pharisee, who prides himself on his superiority to the rest of the world, but with St Paul's assertions of conscious rectitude (Acts xx. 26 ff.; xxiii. 1). They breathe the spirit of simple faith and childlike trust, which throws itself unreservedly on God. Those who make them do not profess to be absolutely sinless, but they do claim to belong to the class of the righteous who may expect God's favour, and they do disclaim all fellowship with the wicked, from whom they expect to be distinguished in the course of His Providence.

And if God's present favour is expected as the reward of right conduct, it must be remembered that the Israelite looked for the visible manifestation of the divine government of the world in the reward of the godly and the punishment of the evildoer in this present life (1 Kings viii. 32, 39). He felt that he had a

right to be treated according to the rectitude of which he was conscious.

Further, it was commonly supposed that there was a proportion between sin and suffering; that exceptional suffering was an evidence of exceptional guilt. This idea throws light upon the assertions of national innocence in xliv. 17 ff., and of personal innocence in lix. 3. They are clearly relative, as much as to say, 'We know of no national apostasy which can account for this defeat as a well-merited punishment:' 'I am not conscious of any personal transgression for which this persecution is a fitting chastisement.' So Job repeatedly acknowledges the sinfulness of man, but denies that he has been guilty of any special sin to account for his extraordinary afflictions.

Some however of these utterances undoubtedly belong to the O. T. and not to the N.T. They are the partial expression of an eternal truth (Matt. xvi. 27), in a form which belongs to the age in which they were spoken. The N. T. has brought a new revelation of the nature of sin, and a more thorough self-knowledge: it teaches the inadmissibility of any plea of merit on man's part (Luke xvii. 10). But the docile spirit which fearlessly submits itself to the divine scrutiny and desires to be instructed (cxxxix. 23, 24) has nothing in common with the Pharisaism which is by its very nature incapable of improvement.

And side by side with these assertions of integrity we find in the Psalms the fullest recognition of personal sinfulness (li. 5; lxix. 5), of man's inability to justify himself before God (cxxx. 3 ff., cxliii. 2), of his need of pardon cleansing and renewal (xxxii, li, lxv. 3), of his dependence on God for preservation from sin (xix. 12 ff.), of the barrier which sin erects between him and God (lxvi. 18, l. 16 ff.); as well as the strongest expressions of absolute self-surrender and dependence on God and entire trust in His mercy (xxv. 4 ff., lxxiii. 25 ff.).

(iii) The so-called *Imprecatory Psalms* have long been felt to constitute one of the 'moral difficulties' of the O.T. We are startled to find the most lofty and spiritual meditations interrupted by passionate prayers for vengeance upon enemies, or ending in triumphant exultation at their destruction. How, we ask, can such utterances be part of a divine revelation? How

can the men who penned them have been in any sense inspired by the Holy Spirit?

These imprecations cannot be explained away, as some have thought, by rendering the verbs as futures, and regarding them as authoritative *declarations* of the certain fate of the wicked. Of these there are many, but in not a few cases the form of the verb is that which specifically expresses a wish or prayer, and it cannot be rendered as a simple future.

Nor again can the difficulty be removed by regarding the imprecations of Pss. lxix and cix as the curses not of the Psalmist himself but of his enemies. Even if this view were exegetically tenable for these two Psalms, which is doubtful, expressions of the same kind are scattered throughout the Psalter. Moreover the Book of Jeremiah contains prayers for vengeance on his enemies, at least as terrible as those of Pss. lxix and cix (Jer. xi. 18 ff.; xv. 15 ff.; xvii. 18; xviii. 19 ff.; xx. 11 ff.).

In what light then are these utterances to be regarded? They must be viewed as belonging to the dispensation of the Old Testament; they must be estimated from the standpoint of the Law, which was based upon the rule of retaliation, and not of the Gospel, which is animated by the principle of love; they belong to the spirit of Elijah, not of Christ; they use the language of the age which was taught to love its neighbour and hate its enemy (Matt. v. 43)[1].

Our Lord explicitly declared that the old dispensation, though not contrary to the new, was inferior to it; that modes of thought and actions were permitted or even enjoined which would not be allowable for His followers; that He had come to 'fulfil' the Law and the Prophets by raising all to a higher moral and spiritual level, expanding and completing what was rudimentary and imperfect (Matt. v. 43: xix. 8; Luke ix. 55).

It is essential then to endeavour to understand the ruling

[1] It is well to remember, on the other hand, that the Law inculcates service to an enemy (Ex. xxiii. 4, 5), and forbids hatred, vengeance, and bearing of grudges (Lev. xix. 17, 18): and the Book of Proverbs bids men leave vengeance to God (xx. 22), and control their exultation at an enemy's misfortune (xxiv. 17, cp. Job xxxi. 29); and teaches that kindness is the best revenge (xxv. 21, 22). We have here the germ of Christian ethics.

ideas and the circumstances of the age in which these Psalms were composed, in order to realise how, from the point of view of that age, such prayers for vengeance and expressions of triumph as they contain could be regarded as justifiable.

In the first place it is important to observe that they are not dictated merely by private vindictiveness and personal thirst for revenge. While it would perhaps be too much to say that they contain no tinge of human passion (for the Psalmists were men of infirmity, and inspiration does not obliterate personal character), they rise to a far higher level. They spring ultimately from zeal for God's cause, and they express a willingness to leave vengeance in the hands of Him to whom it belongs. Retribution is desired and welcomed as part of the divine order (lviii. 11 ; civ. 35).

This was a great advance upon the ruder stage of society, in which each man claimed to be his own avenger. David's first impulse when he was insulted by Nabal was to wreak a terrible vengeance upon him and all that belonged to him. It was the natural instinct of the time. But his final resolve to leave vengeance to God indicated the better feeling that was being learnt (1 Sam. xxv. 21 ff., 39).

Though their form belongs to the circumstances and limitations of the age, these invocations of vengeance are the feeling after a truth of the divine government of the world. For it is the teaching of the N.T. not less than of the O.T. that the kingdom of God must come in judgement as well as in grace. Love no less than justice demands that there should be an ultimate distinction between the good and the evil, that those who will not submit to the laws of the kingdom should be banished from it (Matt. xiii. 49, 50 ; xvi. 27 ; John v. 29).

But while the Gospel proclaims the law of universal love, and bids men pray without ceasing for the establishment of the kingdom of God by the repentance and reformation even of the most hardened offenders, and leave the issue to the future judgement of God, the Law with its stern principle of retribution and its limitation of view to the present life, allowed men to pray for the establishment of the kingdom of God through the destruction of the wicked.

The Prophets and Psalmists of the O.T. had a keen sense of the great conflict constantly going on between good and evil, between God and His enemies[1]. That conflict was being waged in the world at large between Israel as the people of God and the nations which threatened to destroy Israel. The enemies of Israel were the enemies of Israel's God; Israel's defeat was a reproach to His Name; the cause at stake was not merely the existence of the nation, but the cause of divine truth and righteousness. This aspect of the conflict is most completely expressed in Ps. lxxxiii, and prayers for vengeance such as those of lxix. 10, 12 and cxxxvii. 8 express the national desire for the vindication of a just cause, and the punishment of cruel insults.

Within the nation of Israel this same conflict was being waged on a smaller scale between the godly and the ungodly. When the righteous were oppressed and the wicked triumphant, it seemed as though God's rule were being set at nought, as though God's cause were losing. It was not only allowable but a duty to pray for its triumph, and that involved the destruction of the wicked who persisted in their wickedness. There must be no half-heartedness or compromise. In hatred as well as in love the man who fears God must be wholly on His side (cxxxix. 19—22). The perfect ruler resolves not only to choose the faithful in the land for his servants, but "morning by morning" to "destroy all the wicked of the land; to cut off all the workers of iniquity from the city of the LORD" (ci. 6—8); and it seemed only right and natural to pray that the Divine Ruler would do the same.

Further light is thrown on the Imprecatory Psalms by the consideration that there was as yet no revelation of a final judgement in which evil will receive its entire condemnation, or of a future state of rewards and punishments (see p. xciii ff.). Men expected and desired to see a present and visible distinction between the righteous and the wicked, according to the law of the divine government (cxxv. 4, 5; cxlv. 20). It was part of God's lovingkindness not less than of His omnipotence to "reward

[1] See Rainy's *Development of Christian Doctrine*, p. 346, where there is a helpful treatment of the whole question.

every man according to his work" (lxii. 12). The sufferings of the godly and the prosperity of the ungodly formed one of the severest trials of faith and patience to those whose view was limited to the present life (Ps. xxxvii. lxxiii). Although God's sentence upon evil is constantly being executed in this world, it is often deferred and not immediately visible; and those who longed for the vindication of righteousness desired to have it executed promptly before their eyes. Hence the righteous could rejoice when he saw the wicked destroyed, for it was a manifest proof of the righteous government of Jehovah (lii. 5 ff.; liv. 7; lviii. 10, 11; xcii. 11).

Again, it must be remembered that we have been taught to distinguish between the evil man and evil: to love the sinner while we hate his sin. But Hebrew modes of thought were concrete. The man was identified with his wickedness; the one was a part of the other; they were inseparable. Clearly it was desirable that wickedness should be extirpated. How could this be done except by the destruction of the wicked man? What right had he to exist, if he persisted obstinately in his wickedness and refused to reform (l. 16 ff.)?

The imprecations which appear most terrible to us are those which include a man's kith and kin in his doom (lxix. 25; cix. 9 ff.). In order to estimate them rightly it must be borne in mind that a man's family was regarded as part of him. He lived on in his posterity: the sin of the parent was entailed upon the children: if the offence had been monstrous and abnormal, so ought the punishment to be. The defective conception of the rights of the individual, so justly insisted upon by Professor Mozley as one of the chief 'ruling ideas in early ages,' helps us to understand how not only the guilty man, but all his family, could be devoted to destruction[1].

Let it be noted too that what seems the most awful of all anathemas (lxix. 28) would not have been understood in the extreme sense which we attach to it: and some of the expressions which shock us most by their ferocity are metaphors derived from times of wild and savage warfare (lviii. 10; lxviii. 21 ff.). The noblest thoughts may coexist side by side with

[1] See Mozley's *Lectures on the Old Testament*, pp. 87 ff., 198 ff.

much that to a later age seems wholly barbarous and revolting.

These utterances then belong to the spirit of the O.T. and not of the N.T., and by it they must be judged. They belong to the age in which the martyr's dying prayer was not, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts vii. 60), but, "Jehovah look upon it, and require it" (2 Chron. xxiv. 22). It is impossible that such language should be repeated in its old and literal sense by any follower of Him Who has bidden us to love our enemies and pray for them that persecute us.

Yet these utterances still have their lesson. On the one hand they may make us thankful that we live in the light of the Gospel and under the law of Love: on the other hand they testify to the punishment which the impenitent sinner deserves and must finally receive (Rom. vi. 23). They set an example of moral earnestness, of righteous indignation, of burning zeal for the cause of God. Men have need to beware lest in pity for the sinner they condone the sin, or relax the struggle against evil. The underlying truth is still true, that "the cause of sin shall go down, in the persons of those who maintain it, in such a manner as to throw back on them all the evil they have sought to do....This was waited for with inexpressible longing. It was fit it should be....This is not the only truth bearing on the point; but it is truth, and it was then the present truth[1]". It is in virtue of the truth which they contain that these Psalms can be regarded as 'inspired,' and their position in the records of divine revelation justified. Their fundamental motive and idea is the religious passion for justice; and it was by the Holy Spirit that their writers were taught to discern and grasp this essential truth; but the form in which they clothed their desire for its realisation belonged to the limitations and modes of thought of their particular age.

(iv) *The Future Life.* Death is never regarded in the O. T. as annihilation or the end of personal existence. But it is for the most part contemplated as the end of all that deserves to be called life. Existence continues, but all the joy and vigour of vitality are gone for ever (Is. xiv. 10; Ps. cxliii. 3 = Lam. iii. 6).

[1] Rainy, p. 348.

Communion with God is at an end, the dead can no longer "see" Him: they cannot serve or praise Him in the silence of Sheol: His lovingkindness, faithfulness, and righteousness can no longer be experienced there. See Ps. vi. 5; xxv. 9; lxxxviii. 4, 5, 10—12; cxv. 17; Is. xxxviii. 11, 18: and numerous passages in Job, e.g. vii. 9; x. 21 ff.; xiv.

Death is the common lot of all, which none can escape (xlix. 7 ff.; lxxxix. 48), but the righteous and the wicked are distinguished by the manner of their death (lxxiii. 19). When death comes to a man in a good old age, and he leaves his children behind him to keep his name in remembrance, it may be borne with equanimity; but premature death is usually regarded as the sign of God's displeasure and the penal doom of the wicked (xxvi. 9), and childlessness is little better than annihilation.

To the oppressed and persecuted indeed Sheol is a welcome rest (Job iii. 17 ff.), and death may even be a gracious removal from coming evil (Is. lvii. 1, 2); but as a rule death is dreaded as the passage into the monotonous and hopeless gloom of the under-world.

The continuance of existence after death has no moral or religious element in it. It is practically non-existence. The dead man 'is not' (xxxix. 13). It offers neither encouragement nor warning. It brings no solution of the enigmas of the present life. There is no hope of happiness or fear of punishment in the world beyond.

This world was regarded as the scene of recompence and retribution. If reward and punishment did not come to the individual, they might be expected to come to his posterity. For the man lived on in his children: this was his real continuance in life, not the shadowy existence of Sheol: hence the bitterness of childlessness.

Nowhere in the Psalter do we find the hope of a Resurrection from the dead. The prophets speak of a national, and finally of a personal resurrection (Hos. vi. 1 ff.; Is. xxvi. 19; Ezek. xxxvii. 1 ff.; Dan. xii. 2), and predict the final destruction of death (Is. xxv. 8). But just where we should have expected to find such a hope as the ground of consolation, it is conspicuously absent[1].

[1] lvi. 13; lxviii. 20; xc. 3; cxli. 7, which are sometimes referred to,

Indeed it is set on one side as incredible (lxxxviii. 10). It is evident that there was as yet no revelation of a resurrection upon which men could rest; it was no article of the common religious belief to which the faithful naturally turned for comfort[1].

But do we not find that strong souls, at least in rare moments of exultant faith and hope, broke through the veil, and anticipated, not indeed the resurrection of the body, but translation through death into a true life of unending fellowship with God, like Enoch or Elijah?

Do not Pss. xvi, xvii. xlix, lxxiii, plainly speak of the hope of the righteous in his death?

The answer to this question is one of the most difficult problems of the theology of the Psalter. It can only be satisfactorily treated in the detailed exposition of the passages as they stand in their context. Some of the expressions which appear at first sight to imply a sure hope of deliverance from Sheol and of reception into the more immediate presence of God (e.g. xlix. 15, lxxiii. 24) are used elsewhere of temporal deliverance from death or protection from danger, and may mean no more than this (ix. 13, xviii. 16, xxx. 3, lxxxvi. 13, ciii. 4, cxxxviii. 7). Reading these passages in the light of fuller revelation we may easily assign to them a deeper and more precise meaning than their original authors and hearers understood. They adapt themselves so readily to Christian hope that we are easily led to believe that it was there from the first.

Unquestionably these Psalms (xvi, xvii, xlix, lxxiii) do contain the germ and principle of the doctrine of eternal life. It was present to the mind of the Spirit Who inspired their authors. The intimate fellowship with God of which they speak as man's highest good and truest happiness could not, in view of the nature and destiny of man and his relation to God, continue to be regarded as limited to this life and liable to sudden and final interruption. (See Matt. xxii. 31 ff.). It re-

cannot be interpreted of a resurrection. The text of xlviii. 14 is very uncertain; lxxxvi. 13 is a thanksgiving for deliverance from death; cxviii. 17 expresses the hope of such a deliverance.

[1] Contrast the precise statements in the *Psalms of Solomon* quoted on p. xlix, where however it is only a resurrection of the righteous which is anticipated.

quired but a step forward to realise the truth of its permanence, but whether the Psalmists took this step is doubtful.

But even if they did, there was still no clear and explicit revelation on which the doctrine of a future life or of a resurrection could be based. It was but a 'postulate of faith,' a splendid hope, a personal and individual conclusion.

What was the meaning and purpose of this reserve in the teaching of the O. T.? Mankind had to be trained through long ages by this stern discipline to know the bitterness of death as the punishment of sin, and to trust God utterly in spite of all appearances. They had to be profoundly impressed with a sense of need and of the incompleteness of life here, in order that they might long for deliverance from this bondage and welcome it when it came (Heb. ii. 15). Nor could the revelation of the Resurrection and eternal life be made in fulness and certainty (so far as we can see) otherwise than through the victory of the second Adam who through death overcame death and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life (1 Cor. xv. 21 ff.).

Yet, as Delitzsch observes, there is nothing which comes to light in the New Testament which does not already exist in germ in the Psalms. The ideas of death and life are regarded by the Psalmists in their fundamental relation to the wrath and the love of God, in such a way that it is easy for Christian faith to appropriate and deepen, in the light of fuller revelation, all that is said of them in the Psalms. There is no contradiction of the Psalmist's thought, when the Christian as he prays substitutes hell for Sheol in such a passage as vi. 5, for the Psalmist dreaded Sheol only as the realm of wrath and separation from the love of God, which is the true life of man. Nor is there anything contrary to the mind of the authors in the application of xvii. 15 to the future vision of the face of God in all its glory, or of xlix. 14 to the Resurrection morning; for the hopes there expressed in moments of spiritual elevation can only find their full satisfaction in the world to come. The faint glimmerings of twilight in the eschatological darkness of the Old Testament are the first rays of the coming sunrise. And the Christian cannot refrain from passing beyond the

limits of the Psalmists, and understanding the Psalms according to the mind of the Spirit, whose purpose in the gradual revelation of salvation was ever directed towards the final consummation. Thus understood, the Psalms belong to the Israel of the New Testament not less than of the Old Testament.

The Church, in using the Psalms for its prayers, recognises the unity of the two Testaments: and scholarship, in expounding the Psalms, gives full weight to the difference between them. Both are right; the former in regarding the Psalms in the light of the one unchanging salvation, the latter in distinguishing the different periods and steps in which that salvation was historically revealed[1].

The sacred poetry of heathen religions, in spite of all that it contains of noble aspiration and pathetic "feeling after God," has ceased to be a living power. But "the Psalms of those far distant days, the early utterances of their faith and love, still form the staple of the worship and devotion of the Christian Church"... "The Vedic hymns are dead remains, known in their real spirit and meaning to a few students. The Psalms are as living as when they were written....They were composed in an age at least as immature as that of the singers of the Veda: but they are now what they have been for thirty centuries, the very life of spiritual religion—they suit the needs, they express, as nothing else can express, the deepest religious ideas of 'the foremost in the files of time.'[2]"

[1] Delitzsch, *The Psalms*, p. 63.

[2] Dean Church, *The Sacred Poetry of Early Religions*, pp. 12, 38.

CHAPTER X.

THE PSALTER IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

If a history of the use of the Psalter could be written, it would be a history of the spiritual life of the Church. From the earliest times the Psalter has been the Church's manual of Prayer and Praise in its public worship, the treasury of devotion for its individual members in their private communing with God. "No single Book of Scripture, not even of the New Testament, has, perhaps, ever taken such hold on the *heart* of Christendom. None, if we may dare judge, unless it be the Gospels, has had so large an influence in moulding the affections, sustaining the hopes, purifying the faith of believers. With its words, rather than with their own, they have come before God. In these they have uttered their desires, their fears, their confessions, their aspirations, their sorrows, their joys, their thanksgivings. By these their devotion has been kindled and their hearts comforted. The Psalter has been, in the truest sense, the Prayer Book both of Jews and Christians[1]."

"What is the history of the Church," writes Dean Stanley, "but a long commentary on the sacred records of its first beginnings?...The actual effect, the manifold applications, in history, of the words of Scripture, give them a new instruction, and afford a new proof of their endless vigour and vitality.... The Psalter alone, by its manifold applications and uses in after times, is a vast palimpsest, written over and over again, illuminated, illustrated, by every conceivable incident and emotion of men and nations; battles, wanderings, dangers, escapes, deathbeds, obsequies, of many ages and countries, rise, or may rise, to our view as we read it[2]."

It would be impossible in a few pages to trace the history of the use of the Psalter even in the barest outline. All that can

[1] Bishop Perowne, *The Psalms*, p. 22.
[2] Stanley, *The Eastern Church*, pp. lxxiv, lxxv.

be attempted here is to give some few indications of the vast influence which the Psalter has exercised, and of its paramount importance in the history of Christian worship and devotion.

There is no evidence that the entire Psalter was used in the public worship of the Jewish Church, though many Psalms were sung or chanted in the services of the Temple and the Synagogue[1]. But the number of the quotations from the Psalter in the New Testament, and the multitude of indirect allusions to its thoughts and language, prove how familiarly it was known in the apostolic age.

It was upon the Psalms that our Lord's spiritual life was nourished. The sting of the Tempter's quotation of Ps. xci lay in the fact that its words were a precious reality to Him. He sang the 'Hallel' (Pss. cxiii—cxviii) with His disciples at the Last Supper (Matt. xxvi. 30). A Psalm was the subject of His meditation as He hung upon the Cross, and with the words of a Psalm He gave up His life. In the Psalms He and His disciples found the foreshadowing of His own experience (John xiii. 18; ii. 17), and He taught His disciples to understand how they prepared the way for His coming (Luke xxiv. 44). The first Christian hymns—the Magnificat, Benedictus, and Nunc Dimittis—are composed after the model of Psalms and contain numerous echoes of them. Doubtless the hymns which Paul and Silas sang in the prison at Philippi (Acts xvi. 25) were Psalms. St James commends the singing of Psalms as the most fitting expression of joyfulness (v. 13); St Paul enjoins it as the natural outlet for spiritual enthusiasm and a means of mutual edification (Eph. v. 19; Col. iii. 16). It was a common practice at the meetings of the Corinthian Church (1 Cor. xiv. 26).

As we pass on into later ages we find that the singing of Psalms was not only a constant element of common worship, but a favourite occupation of Christians in their homes and at their work. It was a tradition in the Church of Antioch that the antiphonal singing of Psalms was introduced by Ignatius, the first bishop (c. A.D. 100), who saw a vision of angels praising the Trinity in antiphonal hymns, and delivered the method of

[1] For the daily Psalms see above p. xxvii.

singing which he had seen in his vision to the Church at Antioch, whence it spread to all the Churches[1]. The hymns from Holy Scripture which Tertullian in the second century tells us were sung at the *agapae* or love feasts were doubtless Psalms[2]. St Jerome, writing from Bethlehem to Marcella[3], and describing the charms of the Holy Land, tells her that the singing of Psalms was universal. "Wherever you turn the labourer at the plough sings Alleluia: the toiling reaper beguiles his work with Psalms: the vine-dresser as he prunes the vine with his curved pruning-hook sings something of David's. These are the songs of this province: these, to use the common phrase, are its love ditties: these the shepherd whistles; these are the labourer's implements."

St Chrysostom[4] (347—407) thus describes the universality of the use of the Psalms in his day. "If we keep vigil in the Church, David comes first, last, and midst. If early in the morning we seek for the melody of hymns, first, last, and midst is David again. If we are occupied with the funeral solemnities of the departed, if virgins sit at home and spin, David is first, last, and midst[5]. O marvellous wonder! Many who have made but little progress in literature, many who have scarcely mastered its first principles, have the Psalter by heart. Nor is it in cities and churches alone that at all times, through every age, David is illustrious; in the midst of the forum, in the wilderness, and uninhabitable land, he excites the praises of God. In monasteries, amongst those holy choirs of angelic armies, David is first, midst, and last. In the convents of virgins, where are the bands of them that imitate Mary; in the deserts, where are men crucified to this world, and having their conversation with God, first, midst, and last is he. All other men are at night overpowered by natural sleep. David alone is

[1] Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.*, vi. 8.
[2] Tert. *Apol.* c. 39.
[3] Ep. xlvi.
[4] Quoted in Neale and Littledale, *Comm. on the Psalms*, p. 1.
[5] St Chrysostom is referring to that stanza of Theognis,

ἀλλ' αἰεὶ πρῶτόν τε καὶ ὕστατον, ἔν τε μέσοισιν
ἀείσω· σὺ δέ μευ κλῦθι, καὶ ἐσθλὰ δίδου.

active; and congregating the servants of God into seraphic bands, turns earth into heaven, and converts men into angels."

When men and women, forsaking their ordinary callings, dedicated their lives to devotion and prayer in monasteries and communities, the singing of Psalms formed a large part of their religious exercises. In course of time the recitation of the Psalter became a clerical obligation as well. Various schemes or uses were drawn up. Fixed Psalms were generally assigned to certain of the canonical hours, while at the other services the remainder of the Psalms were recited 'in course.' Thus according to the Roman or Gregorian scheme fixed Psalms were assigned for daily use at Lauds, Prime, Tierce, Sext, Nones, and Compline; while at Mattins Pss. i—cix, and at Vespers Pss. cx—cl were taken once a week 'in course,' exclusive of the Psalms assigned to the other services. The Benedictine or Monastic scheme was similar, also providing for the recitation once a week of those Psalms which were not recited daily. The Ambrosian scheme, deriving its origin from St Ambrose, and still in use in the province of Milan, only provides for the recitation of the Psalter once a fortnight. In the Eastern Church the Psalter is divided into twenty *cathismata*, each of which is subdivided into three *staseis*. The whole Psalter is recited once a week ordinarily, and twice a week in Lent, but the details of the arrangement vary according to the time of year[1].

In this way a portion of the Psalms nearly equal in amount to twice the whole Psalter was recited every week. But many instances are quoted of holy men who recited it much more frequently. It is said that St Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland, in the fifth century, repeated it daily; St Maurus, the disciple of St Benedict, and Alcuin, the famous instructor of Charles the Great, did the same. St Kentigern, bishop of Glasgow, in the sixth century, went through it every night. Bede relates how Ecgbert, a young student of noble birth at an Irish monastery,

[1] For full details consult *The Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, art. *Psalmody*, or the *Introduction* to Neale and Littledale's *Commentary on the Psalms*, ch. i. *The Prayer Book Interleaved* has some clear tables, and also an account by the late Dr Schiller-Szinessy of the recital of the Psalms according to the modern Jewish use (p. 255).

when attacked by the plague, vowed that if he recovered he would recite the whole Psalter daily in addition to the ordinary canonical hours, as a memorial of praise to God[1].

A knowledge of the Psalter by heart was required of candidates for ordination. St Gennadius, Patriarch of Constantinople (A.D. 458—471), refused to ordain as priest anyone who had not been diligent in reciting the Psalter. St Gregory the Great inquired if Rusticus, who had been elected Bishop of Ancona, knew the Psalter by heart, and refused to allow John the Presbyter to be consecrated as metropolitan of Ravenna on account of his ignorance of the Psalter. The second Canon of the second Council of Nicaea (A.D. 587) laid it down that no one was to be consecrated bishop unless he knew the Psalter thoroughly, and the eighth Council of Toledo (A.D. 653) ordered that "no one henceforth shall be promoted to any ecclesiastical dignity who does not perfectly know the whole Psalter" (Can. 8).

Various methods of singing the Psalms were in use in ancient times[2]. (1) Sometimes the Psalm was sung throughout by the choir or congregation. This was called *cantus directaneus*, and was the simplest form of singing with little more than monotone. (2) Sometimes the Psalm was sung by a single voice, usually in a very elaborate fashion. This was called *cantus tractus*. (3) Sometimes the Psalm was sung in *cantus responsorius*, the precentor and the choir or the congregation taking their parts alternately. (4) Sometimes the Psalm was sung in *cantus antiphonalis*, the two sides of the choir taking it up alternately. The following passage of St Chrysostom (*Hom.* v) is of interest as shewing the congregational character of the singing in his day, and emphasising its significance. "When the Psalm began, it mingled all the different voices together, and one harmonious song was raised. Young and old, rich and poor, women and men, slaves and freemen, all raised the same melody. ...But it not only united us who were present; it joined the dead with the living. For the blessed Prophet was singing with us....The Prophet speaks and we all answer, we all re-

[1] Bede, *Hist. Eccl.*, iii. 27.

[2] See Neale and Littledale's *Commentary*, p. 58; Proctor and Frere, *New History of the Book of Common Prayer*, p. 345.

spond. You can see no distinction of slave or free, rich or poor, ruler or subject. The inequalities of life are banished; all are united in one choir, all have equal right of speech, and earth imitates Heaven. So great is the nobility of the Church."

The voices of holy men in every age unite in bearing a concordant testimony to the power and preciousness of the Psalms. A few examples only can be given here.

St Athanasius, in his *Epistle to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms*, the whole of which well deserves study, writes thus:

"They seem to me to be a kind of mirror for everyone who sings them, in which he may observe the motions of the soul, and as he observes them give utterance to them in words. He who hears them read, takes them as if they were spoken specially for him. Stricken in his conscience he repents, or hearing of hope in God, and of the grace which is given to those who believe, he rejoices as if this grace were promised to him in particular, and begins to thank God.... He who genuinely studies all that is written in this book of Divine inspiration may gather, as out of a paradise, that which is serviceable for his own need. Methinks that in the words of this book you may find an accurate survey and delineation of the whole life of man, the dispositions of the soul, and the movements of the mind. If a man has need of penitence and confession, if affliction or temptation has overtaken him, if he has been persecuted or has been delivered from the plots of his enemies, if he is in sorrow or trouble, or if he wishes to praise and give thanks and bless the Lord, he finds instruction in the Psalms.... If thou meditate on these things and study the Psalms, thou shalt be able, under the guidance of the Spirit, to grasp their meaning; and thou shalt emulate the life of the divinely inspired men who uttered these words."

From Alexandria let us pass to Cappadocia, and listen to the eloquent words of St Basil, in the introduction to his Homily on the First Psalm:

"All Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable, for it was written by the Spirit to the end that as it were in a general hospital for souls, we human beings might each select the

medicine for his own disease....The prophets provide one kind of instruction, the historians another, the law yet another, and the exhortations of the Proverbs yet another. But the Book of Psalms contains that which is profitable in all of them. It prophesies of the future; it recalls history; it legislates for life; it suggests rules of action; in a word, it is a common storehouse of good doctrines, providing exactly what is expedient for everyone....A Psalm is the calm of souls, the arbiter of peace: it stills the stormy waves of thought. It softens the angry spirit, and sobers the intemperate. A Psalm cements friendship: it unites those who are at variance; it reconciles those who are at enmity. For who can regard as an enemy the man with whom he has joined in lifting up one voice to God? Psalmody therefore provides the greatest of all good things, even love, for it has invented concerted singing as a bond of unity, and fits the people together in the concord of one choir. A Psalm puts demons to flight: it summons the angels to our aid; it is a weapon in the midst of alarms by night, a rest from the toils of day; it is a safeguard for babes, a decoration for adults, a comfort for the aged, a most befitting ornament for women. It makes deserts populous and marketplaces sane. It is an initiation to novices, growth to those who are advancing, confirmation to those who are being perfected. It is the voice of the Church; it gladdens festivals, it creates godly sorrow. For a Psalm calls forth tears even from a stony heart. A Psalm is the employment of angels, heavenly converse, spiritual incense....What mayest thou not learn thence? The heroism of courage; the integrity of justice; the gravity of temperance; the perfection of prudence; the manner of repentance; the measure of patience; in a word every good thing thou canst mention. Therein is a complete theology; the prediction of the advent of Christ in the flesh, the threatening of judgement, the hope of resurrection, the fear of chastisement, promises of glory, revelations of mysteries: all, as in some great public storehouse, are treasured up in the Book of Psalms[1]."

[1] This passage seems to have been in Hooker's mind when he wrote the well-known words quoted on p. viii.

In a well-known passage of his *Confessions* (ix. 4), St Augustine describes the comfort which he derived from the Psalms in the interval before his baptism.

"In what accents I addressed Thee, my God, when I read the Psalms of David, those faithful songs, the language of devotion which banishes the spirit of pride, while I was still a novice in true love of Thee, and as a catechumen rested in that country house along with Alypius, who was also a catechumen, with my mother at our side, in the dress of a woman but with the faith of a man, with the calmness of age, the affection of a mother, the piety of a Christian. How I addressed Thee in those Psalms! how my love for Thee was kindled by them! how I burned to recite them, were it possible, throughout the world, as an antidote to the pride of humanity. Yet they are sung throughout the world, and there is none that hideth himself from Thy heat[1]. How grieved and indignant was I with the Manichaeans[2]! and yet again I pitied them for their ignorance of those sacraments, those medicines, and their mad rejection of the antidote which might have cured them of their madness. Would that they could have been somewhere near me without my knowledge and watched my face and heard my voice when I read the Fourth Psalm in that time of leisure, and have known the effect of that Psalm upon me. Would that they could have heard what I uttered between the words of the Psalm, without my knowing that they heard...how I spoke with myself and to myself before Thee out of the inmost feelings of my soul. I trembled for fear, and then I became fervent with hope and rejoicing in Thy mercy, O Father. And all these feelings issued forth by my eyes and voice..."

The interpretation of the Psalm and the application of it to his own circumstances which follow are fanciful and far-fetched, but they shew how his heart glowed with fervour as he read, and how he found the Psalms "sweetened with heavenly honey, and luminous with the light of God."

Luther and Calvin represent the revival of the study of the Bible in the age of the Reformation.

[1] An allusion to Ps. xix. 6.
[2] Who deprived themselves of the Psalms by rejecting the O. T.

Luther speaks thus of the Psalter, which he found inexpressibly precious in the trials and conflicts of his stormy life:

"You may rightly call the Psalter a Bible in miniature, in which all things which are set forth more at length in the rest of the Scriptures are collected into a beautiful manual of wonderful and attractive brevity. From the Psalms you may learn not the works of the saints only, but the words, the utterances, the groans, the colloquies, which they used in the presence of God, in temptation and in consolation; so that though they are dead, in the Psalms they live and speak. The Psalms exhibit the mind of the saints; they express the hidden treasure of their hearts, the working of their thoughts, and their most secret feelings[1]."

"This book," says Calvin, in the *Epistle to his Readers* prefixed to his commentary, "I am wont to call an anatomy of all the parts of the soul; for no one will find in himself a single feeling of which the image is not reflected in this mirror. Here the Holy Spirit has represented to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, anxieties, in short, all the stormy emotions, by which human minds are wont to be agitated. The rest of Scripture contains the commands which God gave His servants to be delivered to us. Here the prophets themselves, in their converse with God, because they lay bare all their inmost feelings, invite or compel every one of us to examine himself, that none of all the infirmities to which we are subject may remain hidden. It is a rare and singular advantage when every secret recess is laid open, and the heart purged from the foul plague of hypocrisy and brought out to light."

One quotation from a modern writer must suffice. With profound insight and unrivalled delicacy of touch the late Dean Church thus describes the Psalms and their work[2]:

"In the Psalms we see the soul in the secret of its workings, in the variety and play of its many-sided and subtly compounded nature—loving, hoping, fearing, despairing, exulting, repenting, aspiring—the soul, conscious of the greatness and sweetness of

[1] *Works*, ed. 1553, Vol. iii. p. 356.
[2] *The Discipline of the Christian Character*, pp. 53 ff.

its relations to Almighty God, and penetrated by them to the very quick; longing, thirsting, gasping, after the glimpses that visit it, of His goodness and beauty—awestruck before the unsearchableness of His judgement, silent before the certainty of His righteousness—opening, like a flower to the sun, in the presence of His light, of the immensity of His lovingkindness".....It has been the work of the Book of Psalms to teach devotion, worship, self-knowledge. "They bring before us in all its fulness and richness the devotional element of the religious character. They are the first great teachers and patterns of prayer, and they shew this side of the religious character...in varied and finished detail, in all its compass and living and spontaneous force....The tongue is loosed to give utterance out of the abundance of the heart, to every mood, every contrasted feeling of the changeful human mind. From all the hidden depths, from all the strange and secret consciousnesses of the awakened and enlightened soul, spring up unexpected and vivid words, in which generation after generation has found the counterpart of its own convictions and hopes and joys, its own fears and distresses and perplexities and doubts, its own confidence and its own sorrow, its own brightest and darkest hours. This immense variety of mood and subject and occasion, with which the reverence and hope of worship are always combined, is a further point in the work of the Book of Psalms. It is a vast step in the revealing of man to man. We know how much we owe of the knowledge of ourselves to the great dramatists, to the great lyrical poets, to the great novelists. Such, in the unfolding to man of all that is really and most deeply involved in the religious character, is the place of the Book of Psalms."

Luther, as we have seen, calls the Psalms "a Bible in miniature"; and the words which Coleridge uses of the whole Bible may most truly be applied to the Psalms. In them we find copious sources of truth, and power, and purifying impulses; words for our inmost thoughts, songs for our joy, utterances for our hidden griefs, pleadings for our shame and our feebleness. And whatever *finds* us bears witness for itself that it has proceeded from a Holy Spirit, even from the same Spirit, *which*

in all ages entering into holy souls maketh them friends of God and prophets[1].

CHAPTER XI.

LITERATURE.

The literature on the Psalter is enormous, and only a few of the most important and useful works can be mentioned here. An interesting sketch of the history of the exposition of the Psalms will be found in § ix of the *Introduction* to Delitzsch's *Commentary*.

St Athanasius' *Letter to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms* is worthy of its author. It treats of the character and value of the Psalms, classifies them, and indicates how they may be used in the various experiences of life. The most famous Greek commentary on the Psalms is the *Homilies* of St Chrysostom. It was complete, but only the Homilies upon 58 Psalms are now extant. The corresponding work in the Western Church is the *Enarrationes in Psalmos* of St Augustine, expositions of the Psalms for the most part actually delivered, the 32 discourses on Ps. cxix forming an exception. It became the great authority from which subsequent writers drew freely.

Medieval expositors followed in the track of the ancient Fathers. The literal meaning was neglected, mystical and allegorical exegesis was predominant. Dependence on the imperfect Greek and Latin Versions often led them far astray, and the absence of any restraint to the luxuriance of their imagination lays them open to the charge of "making anything out of anything." But the patristic and medieval commentaries are rich in beautiful thought, profound spiritual instruction, and practical application.

To the Jewish commentators of the Middle Ages we owe a great debt. They preserved the tradition of the meaning of the Hebrew language, which had been entirely neglected

[1] Coleridge's *Letters on the Inspiration of the Scriptures*, Letter i.

in the Christian Church, and to them the scholars of the 16th century turned when the study of the original text was revived. Chief among them were Raschi (R. Solomon Isaaki) of Troyes (d. A.D. 1105), Aben Ezra of Toledo (d. A.D. 1167), and David Kimchi of Narbonne (d. about A.D. 1235)[1].

The most important works of the Reformation period were those of Luther, who lectured and wrote much on the Psalms, and Calvin, whose Commentary (1567) marked a new departure in the combination of sound exegesis with practical application. Poole's *Synopsis Criticorum*, an abridgment of the *Critici Sacri* published in 1660 in London under the direction of Bishop Pearson and others, is a convenient summary of the opinions of scholars of the 16th and 17th centuries. Martin Geier's voluminous work (1668) is one of the best productions of the 17th century.

Rosenmuller's *Scholia* (1798—1804, 2nd ed. of the Psalms 1821—23) may be said to mark the transition to the modern period. It is mainly a compilation from older works, and is still valuable, especially for its copious citation of Jewish authorities and for its comments on the renderings of the LXX and other Versions. Among modern German Commentaries those of H. Ewald, H. Hupfeld, F. Delitzsch, and F. Baethgen, are the most generally useful. Ewald's *Commentary* in *The Poets of the O.T.* (1836, 3rd ed. 1866, translated in the Theol. Transl. Fund Library, 1880) is distinguished by "intense poetic and religious sympathy, and by a keen and discriminating historical imagination." Hupfeld's work (1855—62, 2nd ed. with additions by Riehm, 1867—71, 3rd ed., revised by Nowack, 1888) is serviceable for its careful investigation of the meaning of the language. Delitzsch (1867, 5th ed. 1894, translation from the 4th ed. by Eaton, 1887), if sometimes fanciful, is always reverent, and constantly penetrates to the deeper meaning. Baethgen, in the *Handkommentar zum A.T.* (1892, 2nd ed. 1897), represents a newer school of critics, without the extravagances which unfortunately disfigure the work of some of them.

[1] The commentary of Raschi is accessible to those who do not know Rabbinic Hebrew in the Latin translation of J. F. Breithaupt (1710); that of Kimchi in the Latin translation of A. Janvier (1566).

Other German commentaries are those of F. Hitzig, 1835, completely revised edition, 1863–5; A. Tholuck, *Uebersetzung und Auslegung der Psalmen für Geistliche und Laien der christlichen Kirche*, 1843, 2nd ed. 1873; J. Olshausen in the *Kurzgef. exeg. Handbuch*, 1853; H. Gratz, *Kritischer Commentar zu den Psalmen*, 1882, (gives much interesting information from Jewish sources, but emends the text too freely): F. W. Schultz in the *Kurzgef. Kommentar*, 1888, replaced by that of H. Kessler, 1899; B. Duhm in the *Kurzer Hand-Commentar*, 1899 (trenchant and often suggestive, but shewing little appreciation of either the poetical or the religious worth of the Psalms).

Among French commentaries may be mentioned that of E. Reuss, 1879, *Le Psautier, ou le Livre de Cantiques de la Synagogue* (strongly advocating the national interpretation of the Psalms).

At the head of English commentaries stands that of Bishop Perowne, *The Book of Psalms, a new Translation, with Introductions and Notes, explanatory and critical* (1864, 8th ed. 1892), which marks an epoch in the exegesis of the O.T. in England. W. Kay, *The Psalms with Notes*, 1871, 2nd ed. 1874, contains much that is instructive. T. K. Cheyne, *The Book of Psalms, A new Translation with Commentary*, 1888, is fresh and suggestive. A. Maclaren's *Exposition*, in the *Expositor's Bible*, 1893–94, is vigorous and practical.

Among many other commentaries the following may be mentioned: J. M. Neale and R. F. Littledale, *A Commentary on the Psalms from Primitive and Mediæval Writers*, 4th ed. 1884 (useful for the dissertation on *The Psalms as employed in the Offices of the Church*, and as giving an insight into the methods of patristic and mediæval interpretation which have exercised such a wide influence)[1]: *The Psalms Chronologically arranged, by Four Friends*, 1867, 2nd ed. 1891 (based upon Ewald): F. C. Cook, G. H. S. Johnson and C. J. Elliott, in *The*

[1] The Dissertation on *The Mystical and Literal Interpretation of the Psalms* at p. 429 of Vol. i should not be overlooked by those who wish to understand, if they cannot follow, a method of interpretation which has had such a wide currency and still has a strong attraction for many minds.

Speaker's Commentary, 1873: A. C. Jennings and W. H. Lowe, *The Psalms with Introduction and Critical Notes*, 1875-7: C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 1870-85 (containing, besides his own exposition, a copious collection of extracts from various writers, especially the Puritans): A. S. Aglen, in Bp Ellicott's *O. T. Comm. for English Readers*, 1884 (contains many interesting illustrations from English literature): Bishop Barry, in *The Teacher's Prayer Book*. E. G. King, *The Psalms in Three Collections, translated with notes*, 1898, 1902: C. G. Montefiore, *The Book of Psalms*, 1901 (from *The Bible for Home Reading*).

Among books and articles bearing on the study of the Psalms the following may be mentioned. J. G. von Herder, *vom Geist der Ebr. Poesie*, 1782-3: Isaac Taylor, *The Spirit of the Hebrew Poetry*: Archbishop Alexander, Bampton Lectures for 1876, *The Witness of the Psalms to Christ and Christianity*, 2nd ed. 1878: T. K. Cheyne, Bampton Lectures for 1889, *The Origin and Religious Contents of the Psalter in the Light of Old Testament Criticism and the History of Religions*, 1891: J. Sharpe, *The Student's Handbook to the Psalms*, 2nd ed., 1894: W. T. Davison, *The Praises of Israel*, 1893, 2nd ed., 1897 (a brightly written introduction to the study of the Psalms): J. Robertson, *Poetry and Religion of the Psalms*, 1898: W. Robertson Smith, *The O. T. in the Jewish Church*, Lect. vii. R. W. Church, *The Sacred Poetry of Early Religions* (published separately, and also in *The Gifts of Civilisation*), also Sermon iii in *The Discipline of the Christian Character*: A. Neubauer, *On the Titles of the Psalms according to early Jewish Authorities*, in *Studia Biblica*, Vol. ii, 1890: C. Ehrt, *Abfassungszeit und Abschluss des Psalters zur Prüfung der Frage nach Makkabäerpsalmen historisch-kritisch untersucht*, 1869: M. Kopfstein, *Die Asaph-Psalmen untersucht*, 1881: R. Smend, *Ueber das Ich der Psalmen*, Z.A.T.W. 1888, pp. 49—147, on the question Who is the speaker in the Psalms? discussed very fully and more moderately by G. Beer, *Individual- und Gemeinde-Psalmen*, 1894: B. Stade, *Die Messianische Hoffnung im Psalter*, Zeitschr. f. Theol. u. Kirche, 1892, pp. 369 ff.: J. Wellhausen, in Haupt's *Sacred Books of the O.T.*, text 1895, English translation (by

H. H. Furness) with explanatory notes and an Appendix on the Music of the Ancient Hebrews, 1878: cp. *Skizzen u. Vorarbeiten*, vi. 163.

Much interesting illustrative matter on the use of the Psalms is to be found in J. Ker's *The Psalms in History and Biography*, 1888, A. S. Dyer's *Psalm-Mosaics*, 1894, and most fully and attractively in R. E. Prothero's *The Psalms in Human Life*, 1904: comp. § i of the *Introduction* to Tholuck's commentary, and ch. ii of the *Introd.* to Bp Perowne's commentary.

The Paragraph Psalter, by Bp Westcott, 1879, contains a suggestive marginal analysis. S. R. Driver, *The Parallel Psalter, being the Prayer Book Version of the Psalms, and a New Version, with an Introduction and Glossaries*, (on the origin and history of the Prayer Book Psalter, and explaining characteristic words and archaisms). A convenient Parallel Psalter containing P.B.V., A.V., and R.V. in parallel columns, is published by the Camb. Univ. Press. The Wycliffite Version of Nicholas de Hereford and John Purvey is accessible in a reprint from Forshall and Madden's edition, published by the Clarendon Press, 1881: and the original of the Prayer Book Version is reproduced in J. Earle's *The Psalter of the Great Bible of 1539, a Landmark in English Literature, with Introduction and Notes*, 1894. On the Metrical Versions of the Psalter consult Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology*, and H. A. Glass, *The Story of the Psalters*, 1888.

To the commentaries mentioned above may now (1906) be added those of W. T. Davison in *The Century Bible*, 1904; W. F. Cobb, *The Book of Psalms with Introduction and Notes*, 1905; C. A. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Book of Psalms*, 1906, in *The International Critical Commentary* (full and elaborate, devoting special attention to metrical structure, and editorial changes).

Quis audeat praesumere unum Psalmum rotunde ab ullo intellectum? Vita nostra initium et profectus est non consummatio.—LUTHER.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

PSALM I.

THIS Psalm is the development in poetical language and imagery of the thought repeated in so many forms in the Book of Proverbs (e.g. ii. 21, 22), that it is well with the righteous and ill with the wicked. The belief in Jehovah's righteous government of the world was a fundamental principle of Old Testament religion, and it is here asserted without any of those doubts and questionings which disturbed the minds of many Psalmists and Prophets, especially in the later stages of Old Testament revelation.

The Psalm forms an appropriate prologue to the Psalter, which records the manifold experiences of the godly. For it affirms the truth to which they clung, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, in spite of the sufferings of the righteous and the triumphs of the wicked, that the only sure and lasting happiness for man is to be found in fellowship with God.

The Psalm expresses a general truth, and does not appear to refer to any particular person or occasion. Hence date and authorship must remain uncertain. Some (without good reason) have assigned it to David, during his persecution by Saul, or during Absalom's rebellion: Dean (now Bp.) Perowne conjectures that it may have been written by Solomon as an introduction to a collection of David's poems: Prof. Cheyne thinks that it was a product of the fresh enthusiasm for the study of the Law in the time of Ezra.

Two considerations however limit the period to which it may be assigned.

(1) It is earlier than Jeremiah, who paraphrases and expands part of it in ch. xvii. 5—8 with reference to Jehoiakim or Jehoiachin.

(2) The most striking parallels in thought and language are to be found in the middle section of the Book of Proverbs (x—xxiv), which dates from a comparatively early period in the history of Judah, if not from the reign of Solomon himself. The 'scorner' is a character hardly mentioned outside of the Book of Proverbs: the contrast of the righteous and the wicked, and the belief that prosperity is the reward of piety, and adversity of ungodliness, are especially conspicuous in the middle section of that book: and further striking coincidences in detail of thought and language will easily be found.

The absence of a title distinguishes it from the mass of Psalms in Book I., and points to its having been derived from a different source. It may have been composed or selected as a preface to the original 'Davidic' collection (*Introd.* p. viii), or, though this is less probable, placed here by the final editor of the Psalter.

The Psalm consists of two equal divisions:

i. The enduring prosperity of the righteous (1—3),

ii. contrasted with the speedy ruin of the wicked (4—6).

Observe the affinity of this Psalm to xxvi; and still more to cxii, which celebrates the blessedness of the righteous, and begins and ends with the same words (*Blessed...perish*): and contrast with its simple confidence the questioning of xxxvii and lxxiii, in which the problem of the prosperity of the wicked is treated as a trial of faith.

1 BLESSED *is* the man
That walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor standeth in the way of sinners,
Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

1—3. The happiness of the righteous.

1. More exactly:

Happy the man who hath not walked in the counsel of wicked men,
Nor stood in the way of sinners,
Nor sat in the session of scorners.

Blessed] Or, **happy**: LXX *μακάριος*. Cp. Matt. v. 3 ff. The righteous man is first described negatively. All his life he has observed the precept, 'depart from evil' (xxxiv. 14).

the ungodly] Rather, **wicked men**: and so in *vv.* 4, 5, 6. It is the most general term in the O. T. for the ungodly in contrast to the righteous. If the primary notion of the Hebrew word *rāshā* is *unrest* (cp. Job iii. 17; Is. lvii. 20, 21), the word well expresses the disharmony which sin has brought into human nature, affecting man's relation to God, to man, to self.

sinners] Those who miss the mark, or go astray from the path of right. The intensive form of the word shews that habitual offenders are meant. Cp. Prov. i. 10 ff.

the scornful] Better, as the word is rendered in Proverbs, **scorners**: those who make what is good and holy the object of their ridicule. With the exception of the present passage and Is. xxix. 20 (cp. however Is. xxviii. 14, 22, R.V.; Hos. vii. 5) the term is peculiar to the Book of Proverbs. There 'the scorners' appear as a class of defiant and cynical freethinkers, in contrast and antagonism to 'the wise.' The root-principle of their character is a spirit of proud self-sufficiency, a contemptuous disregard for God and man (Prov. xxi. 24). It is impossible to reform them, for they hate reproof, and will not seek instruction (xiii. 1; xv. 12). If they seek for wisdom they will not find it (xiv. 6). It is folly to argue with them (ix. 7, 8).

But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD;
And in his law doth he meditate day and night.

They are generally detested (xxiv. 9), and in the interests of peace must be banished from society (xxii. 10). Divine judgements are in store for them, and their fate is a warning to the simple (ii. 34; xix. 25, 29; xxi. 11).

The three clauses of the verse with their threefold parallelism (walk, stand, sit: counsel, way, session: wicked, sinners, scorners) emphasise the godly man's entire avoidance of association with evil and evil-doers in every form and degree. They denote successive steps in a career of evil, and form a climax: (1) adoption of the principles of the wicked as a rule of life: (2) persistence in the practices of notorious offenders: (3) deliberate association with those who openly mock at religion. With the first clause and for the phrase *counsel of the wicked* cp. Mic. vi. 16; Jer. vii. 24; Job x. 3; xxi. 16; xxii. 18: for *stood* &c., cp. Ps. xxxvi. 4. For both clauses cp. the concrete example in 2 Chron. xxii. 3—5. With the third clause cp. Ps. xxvi. 4, 5.

2. The positive principle and source of the righteous man's life. The law of the Lord is his rule of conduct. It is no irksome restriction of his liberty but the object of his love and constant study (Deut. vi. 6—9). True happiness is to be found not in ways of man's own devising, but in the revealed will of God. "The purpose of the Law was to make men happy." Kay. Cp. Deut. xxxiii. 29.

his delight] The religion of Israel was not an external formalism, but an obedience of the heart. Cp. xxxvii. 31; xl. 8; cxii. 1; cxix. 35, 97.

the law of the LORD] The Hebrew word *tôrāh* has a much wider range of meaning than *law*, by which it is always rendered in the A.V. It denotes (1) *teaching, instruction*, whether human (Prov. i. 8), or divine; (2) *a precept* or *law*; (3) *a body of laws*, and in particular *the Mosaic law*, and so finally *the Pentateuch*. The parallel to the second clause of the verse in Josh. i. 8 suggests a particular reference to Deuteronomy; but the meaning here must not be limited to the Pentateuch or any part of it. Rather as in passages where it is parallel to and synonymous with *the word of the LORD* (Is. i. 10; ii. 3) it should be taken to include all Divine revelation as the guide of life.

meditate] The Psalmists meditate on God Himself (lxiii. 6); on His works in nature and in history (lxxvii. 12; cxliii. 5).

3. The consequent prosperity of the godly man is emblematically described. As a tree is nourished by constant supplies of water, without which under the burning Eastern sun it would wither and die, so the life of the godly man is maintained by the supplies of grace drawn from constant communion with God through His revelation. Cp. lii. 8; xcii. 12; cxxviii. 3; Num. xxiv. 6. If a special tree is meant, it is probably not the oleander (Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 146), which bears no fruit; nor the vine (Ezek. xix. 10); nor the pomegranate; but the palm. Its love of water, its stately growth, its evergreen foliage, its valuable fruit, combine to suggest that it is here referred to. Cp. Ecclus. xxiv. 14; and see Thomson's *Land and the Book*, p. 48 f.

3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,
That bringeth forth his fruit in his season;
His leaf also shall not wither;
And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.
4 The ungodly *are* not so:
But *are* like the chaff which the wind driveth away.
5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

the rivers of water] Better, streams of water: either natural watercourses (Is. xliv. 4): or more probably artificial channels for irrigating the land. Cp. Prov. xxi. 1; Eccl. ii. 5, 6.

and whatsoever &c.] Or, as R.V. marg., *in whatsoever he doeth he shall prosper*. The figure of the tree is dropped, and the words refer directly to the godly man. The literal meaning of the word rendered *prosper* is *to carry through* to a successful result. Cp. Josh. i. 8; and for illustration, Gen. xxxix. 3, 23.

4—6. The character and destiny of the wicked.

4. In sharp contrast to the firmly-rooted, flourishing, fruitful tree is the chaff on the threshing-floor, worthless in itself, and liable to be swept away by every passing breeze.

The scattering of chaff by the wind is a common figure in the O.T. for the sudden destruction of the wicked. Cp. xxxv. 5; Job xxi. 18; Is. xxix. 5; Hos. xiii. 3. Here it describes their character as well as their fate. It would be vividly suggestive to those who were familiar with the sight of the threshing-floors, usually placed on high ground to take advantage of every breeze, on which the corn was threshed out and winnowed by throwing it up against the wind with shovels, the grain falling on the floor to be carefully gathered up, the chaff left to be carried away by the wind and vanish.

The P.B.V. following the LXX and Vulg. adds *from the face of the earth*. Cp. Am. ix. 8; Zeph. i. 2, 3.

5. *Therefore*] The real character of the wicked will be manifested in the judgement. Since they are thus worthless and unstable, destitute of root and fruit, the wicked will not hold their ground in the judgement, in which Jehovah separates the chaff from the wheat (Matt. iii. 12).

stand] So Lat. *causa stare*, and the opposite *causa cadere*. Cp. v. 5; cxxx. 3; Nah. i. 6; Mal. iii. 2; Wisd. v. 1.

in the judgment] Not, before a human tribunal: nor merely in the last judgement, (as the Targum and many interpreters understand it): but in every act of judgement by which Jehovah separates between the righteous and the wicked, and vindicates His righteous government of the world. Cp. as an illustration Num. xvi. Each such 'day of the LORD' is a type and pledge of the great day of judgement. Cp. Is. i. 24 ff., ii. 12 ff.; Mal. iii. 5; Eccl. xii. 14.

in the congregation of the righteous] The 'congregation of Israel,' which is the 'congregation of Jehovah,' is in its true idea and ultimate

For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous:
But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

destination, the 'congregation of the righteous' (cxi. 1). It is the aim of each successive judgement to purify it, until at last the complete and final separation shall be effected (Matt. xiii. 41—43).

6. The teaching of the Psalm is grounded on the doctrine of divine Providence. Each clause of the verse implies the supplement of its antithesis to the other clause. 'The LORD knows the way of the righteous,' and under His care it is a 'way of life' (xvi. 11; Prov. xii. 28); 'a way of peace' (Is. lix. 8); 'a way eternal' (cxxxix. 24). Equally He knows the way of the wicked, and by the unalterable laws of His government it can lead only to destruction; it is a way of death (Prov. xiv. 12).

knoweth] Divine knowledge cannot be abstract or ineffectual. It involves approval, care, guidance; or abandonment, judgement. The righteous man's course of life leads to God Himself: and He takes care that it does not fail of its end (Nah. i. 7; 2 Tim. ii. 19).

PSALM II.

The circumstances which called forth this Psalm stand out clearly. A king of Israel, recently placed upon the throne, and consecrated by the solemn rite of anointing to be Jehovah's representative in the government of His people, is menaced by a confederacy of subject nations, threatening to revolt and cast off their allegiance. The moment is critical: but his cause is Jehovah's; their endeavour is futile. He asserts his high claims; and the nations are exhorted to yield a willing submission, and avoid the destruction which awaits rebels against the authority of Jehovah.

Who then was the king? and what was the occasion referred to? The king's consciousness of his high calling, and the confidence with which he appeals to the divine promise, point to a time when that promise was still recent, and the lofty ideal of the theocratic kingdom had not been blurred and defaced by failure and defeat. For such a time we must go back to the reigns of David and Solomon.

(1) The language of Acts iv. 25 does not decide the question, for 'David' in the N.T. may mean no more than 'the Psalter' (Heb. iv. 7) or 'a Psalmist.' The older commentators however attribute the Psalm to David, and suppose the occasion to have been the attack of the Philistines shortly after he was anointed king over all Israel (2 Sam. v. 17 ff.), or of the confederacy of Ammonites and Syrians described in 2 Sam. x. But the Psalm speaks plainly (*v.* 3) of *subject* nations, while the Philistines certainly were not David's subjects at the time, and it is doubtful if the Syrians were. See note on 2 Sam. x.

(2) On the other hand there is good reason for supposing that Solomon was the king referred to. He was anointed at Gihon, and solemnly enthroned on Zion (1 Kings i. 45). Zion was already 'Jehovah's holy mountain' in virtue of the presence of the Ark there. So strongly was the theocratic character of the kingdom then realised that he is said to have sat 'on the throne of Jehovah' (1 Chr. xxix. 23; cp. xxviii. 5).

The Psalm is based upon the great promise in 2 Sam. vii. 12 ff., which, although not limited to Solomon, would naturally be claimed by him with special confidence. Solomon succeeded to the great kingdom which his father had built up. But he was young. The succession was disputed. What more likely than that some of the subject nations should threaten to revolt upon his accession? Hadad's request (1 Kings xi. 21) shews that his enemies thought that their opportunity was come. It is true that we have no account of any such revolt in the Historical Books. But their records are incomplete and fragmentary: and the language of the Psalm implies that the revolt was only threatened, and had not as yet broken out into open war. There was still hope that wiser counsels might prevail (*vv.* 10 ff.): and if they did, we should hardly expect to find any reference in Kings and Chron. to a mere threat of rebellion. Moreover, though Solomon's reign was on the whole peaceful, there are incidental notices which make it plain that it was not uniformly and universally so. He made great military preparations (1 Kings iv. 26; ix. 15 ff.; xi. 27: 2 Chron. viii. 5 ff.), and engaged in wars (2 Chron. viii. 3); and Hadad and Rezon succeeded in 'doing him mischief' (1 Kings xi. 21—25).

(3) The conjectures which refer the Psalm to a later occasion have but little probability. The confederacy of Pekah and Rezin against Ahaz (Is. vii.); and the invasion of Judah by the Moabites and their allies (2 Chr. xx.) have been suggested: but neither of these was a *revolt* of subject nations.

The question still remains whether Solomon was himself the writer. The king and the poet appear to be identified in *vv.* 7 ff.; but in such a highly dramatic Psalm, it is at least possible that the poet might introduce the king as a speaker, as he introduces the nations (*v.* 3), and Jehovah (*v.* 6).

The particular historical reference is however of relatively small moment compared with the typical application of the Psalm to the Kingdom of Christ. To understand this, it is necessary to realise the peculiar position of the Israelite king. Israel was Jehovah's son, His firstborn (Ex. iv. 22; Deut. xxxii. 6); and Israel's king, as the ruler and representative of the people, was adopted by Jehovah as His son, His firstborn (2 Sam. vii. 13 ff.; Ps. lxxxix. 26, 27). It was a moral relationship, sharply distinguished from the supposed descent of kings and heroes from gods in the heathen world in virtue of which they styled themselves *Zeus-born*, *sons of Zeus*, and the like. It involved on the one side fatherly love and protection, on the other filial obedience and devotion.

The king moreover was not an absolute monarch in his own right. He was the Anointed of Jehovah, His viceroy and earthly representative. To him therefore was given not only the sovereignty over Israel, but the sovereignty over the nations. Rebellion against him was rebellion against Jehovah.

Thus, as the adopted son of Jehovah and His Anointed King, he was the type of the eternal Son of God, the 'Lord's Christ.' Then, as successive kings of David's line failed to realise their high destiny, men were taught to look for the coming of One who should fulfil the Divine

words of promise, giving them a meaning and a reality beyond hope and imagination. See *Introd.* p. lxxvi ff.

This Psalm then is typical and prophetic of the rebellion of the kingdoms of the world against the kingdom of Christ, and of the final triumph of the kingdom of Christ. To Him all nations are given for an inheritance; if they will not submit He must judge them. This typical meaning does not however exclude (as some commentators think), but rather requires, a historic foundation for the Psalm.

In connexion with this Psalm should be studied 2 Sam. vii.; Ps. lxxxix; and Pss. xxi, xlv, lxxii and cx.

The references to the Psalm in the N. T. should be carefully examined.

(1) In Acts iv. 25—28, *vv.* 1, 2 are applied to the confederate hostility of Jews and Gentiles against Christ.

(2) *v.* 7 was quoted by St Paul at Antioch (Acts xiii. 33) as fulfilled in the Resurrection of Christ (cp. Rom. i. 4): and in the Epistle to the Hebrews the words are cited (the Messianic reference of the Psalm being evidently generally admitted) to describe the superiority of the Son to angels (i. 5): and as a declaration of the Divine sonship of Christ, in connexion with the proof of the Divine origin of His high-priesthood (v. 5).[1]

(3) It contains the titles 'my Son' (Matt. iii. 17), and 'the Lord's Christ' (Luke ii. 26), which describe the nature and office of the Messiah. Comp. Matt. xvi. 16: John xx. 31.

(4) Its language is repeatedly borrowed in the Revelation, the great epic of the conflict and triumph of Christ's kingdom. He 'rules the nations with a rod of iron' (Rev. xii. 5, xix. 15); and delegates the same power to His servants (ii. 26, 27). 'Kings of the earth' occurs no less than nine times in this book (i. 5, &c.). 'He that sitteth in the heavens' is the central figure there (iv. 2 and frequently).

These quotations sufficiently explain the choice of the Psalm as one of the Proper Psalms for Easter Day.

In a few Heb. MSS. the Second Psalm is reckoned as the First, the First being treated as an independent prologue to the whole book; in a few other MSS. the two are united. Origen says that this was the case in one of two copies he had seen (*Op.* ii. 537): and there was an ancient Jewish saying, "The first Psalm begins with blessing (i. 1), and ends with blessing" (ii. 12). Some recensions of the LXX appear to have followed this arrangement, though Origen speaks as if all the Greek copies with which he was acquainted divided the two Psalms. Justin Martyr in his Apology (i. 40) cites Pss. i and ii as a continuous prophecy, and in Acts xiii. 33 D and cognate authorities representing the 'Western' text, read, 'in the *first* Psalm.'

But though there are points of contact in phraseology (*blessed*, i. 1, ii. 12; *meditate*, i. 2, ii. 1; *perish* connected with *way*, i. 6; ii. 12); they are clearly distinct in style and character. Ps. i is the calm expression of a general truth; Ps. ii springs out of a special occasion; it is full of movement, and has a correspondingly vigorous

[1] In D and cognate authorities the words, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee" are substituted for "Thou art my beloved son, in thee I am well pleased," in Luke iii. 22. This was also the reading of the Ebionite Gospel.

rhythm. Probably the absence of a title to Ps. ii (contrary to the usual practice of Book I) accounts for its having been joined to Ps. i.

The Psalm is dramatic in form. The scene changes. Different persons are introduced as speakers. Its structure is definite and artistic. It consists of four stanzas, each (except the second) of seven lines.

i. The poet contemplates with astonishment the tumult of the nations, mustering with the vain idea of revolt from their allegiance (1—3).

ii. But looking from earth to heaven he beholds Jehovah enthroned in majesty. He mocks their puny efforts. He has but to speak, and they are paralysed (4—6).

iii. The king speaks, and recites the solemn decree by which Jehovah has adopted him for His son, and given him the nations for his inheritance, with authority to subdue all opposition (7—9).

iv. The poet concludes with an exhortation to the nations to yield willing submission, instead of resisting to their own destruction (10—12).

2 Why do the heathen rage,
And the people imagine a vain *thing*?
2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,

1—3. The muster of the nations and its design.

1. *Why*] The Psalmist gazes on the great tumult of the nations mustering for war, till the sight forces from him this question of mingled astonishment and indignation. Their insurrection is at once causeless and hopeless.

the heathen] Better, as R.V., **the nations**. *Gôyim*, variously rendered in A.V. *nations, heathen, Gentiles*, denotes the non-Israelite nations as distinguished from and often in antagonism to the people of Jehovah. Sometimes the word has a moral significance and may rightly be rendered *heathen*.

rage] Rather, as in marg., *tumultuously assemble*; or, *throng together*. Cp. the cognate subst. in Ps. lxiv. 2, *insurrection*, R.V. *tumult*, marg. *throng*.

the people] R.V. rightly, **the peoples**. Comp. xliv. 2, 14.

imagine] Or, *meditate*: the same word as in i. 2; but in a bad sense, as in xxxviii. 12.

2. *The kings of the earth*] In contrast to 'my king,' *v.* 6. Cp. the use of the phrase in striking contexts, lxxvi. 12; lxxxix. 27; cii. 15; cxxxviii. 4; cxlviii. 11; Is. xxiv. 21.

set themselves] The tenses of the original in *vv.* 1, 2 give a vividness and variety to the picture which can hardly be reproduced in translation. *Rage* and *take counsel* are perfects, representing the throng as already gathered, and the chiefs seated in divan together: *imagine* and *set themselves* are imperfects (the graphic, pictorial tense of Hebrew poetry), representing their plot in process of development. The rapid

Against the LORD, and against his anointed, *saying*,
Let us break their bands asunder, 3
And cast away their cords from us.
He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: 4
The LORD shall have them in derision.
Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, 5
And vex them in his sore displeasure.
Yet have I set my king 6

lively rhythm moreover well suggests the stir and tumult of the gathering host.

against the LORD] They would not deny that in making war upon Israel they were making war upon Israel's God (2 Kings xviii. 32 ff.); but they little knew Whom they were defying (2 Kings xix. 22 ff.).

3. The words of the kings and rulers exhorting one another to cast off *the yoke* of subjection. Bands are the fastenings by which the yoke was secured upon the neck (Jer. xxvii. 2; xxx. 8; Nah. i. 13; &c.): cords are perhaps merely synonymous with *bands*: but as the language of the previous clause is derived from the figure of an ox yoked for ploughing, *cords* may naturally be understood to mean the reins by which the animal was guided and kept under control. Cp. Job xxxix. 10; Hos. xi. 4.

4—6. The poet-seer draws aside the veil, and bids us look from earth to heaven. There the supreme Ruler of the world sits enthroned in majesty. With sovereign contempt He surveys these petty plottings, and when the moment comes confounds them with a word.

4. *He that sitteth in the heavens*] Enthroned in majesty (cxxiii. 1), but withal watching and controlling the course of events upon the earth (xi. 4; ciii. 19; cxiii. 4 ff.; Rev. v. 13; vi. 16).

shall laugh...shall have them in derision] Or, *laugheth...mocketh at them*. Cp. xxxvii. 13; lix. 8; Prov. i. 26. The O.T. uses human language of God without fear of lowering Him to a human level.

the LORD] This is the reading of 1611, restored by Dr Scrivener. Most editions, and R.V., have *the Lord*, in accordance with the Massoretic Text, which reads *Adonai*, not JEHOVAH. The variation is perhaps significant. God is spoken of as the sovereign ruler of the world, rather than as the covenant God of Israel.

5. *Then*] There is a limit to the divine patience. He will not always look on in silence. If they persist in their folly He must speak, and His word (like that of His representative, Is. xi. 4) is power.

vex] Trouble, confound, dismay, with panic terror, paralysing their efforts. Cp. xlviii. 5; lxxxiii. 15, 17.

in his sore displeasure] Lit. *fiery wrath* (Ex. xv. 7), a word used almost exclusively of divine anger.

6. *Yet have I set*] R.V., **Yet I have set**. The first stanza ended with the defiant words of the rebels: the second stanza ends with the answer of Jehovah. The sentence is elliptical, and the pronoun is

Upon my holy hill of Zion.
7 I will declare the decree:
The LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son;
This day have I begotten thee.
8 Ask of me,
And I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance,
And the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.

emphatic: 'Why this uproar, when it is *I* Who have set up My king' &c. The meaning of the word rendered *set* has been much disputed, but it certainly means *set up*, or *appointed*, not, as A.V. marg., *anointed*. Cp. Prov. viii. 23.

my king] A king appointed by Me, to rule over My people, as My representative. Cp. 1 Sam. xvi. 1.

my holy hill of Zion] Zion, the name of the ancient stronghold which became the city of David (2 Sam. v. 7), consecrated by the presence of the Ark until the Temple was built, is the poetical and prophetical name for Jerusalem in its character as the holy city, the earthly dwelling-place of Jehovah, and the seat of the kingdom which He had established. For a discussion of the topographical difficulties connected with the site of Zion see Comm. on 2 Samuel, p. 239.

7–9. Jehovah has acknowledged the king as His own: and now the king takes up Jehovah's declaration, and appeals to the Divine decree of sonship, and the promise of world-wide dominion.

7. *the decree*] The solemn and authoritative edict, promulgated in the promise made to David and his house through Nathan (2 Sam. vii. 12 ff.).

hath said unto me] Better, **said unto me** (R.V.), or, **said of me.**

this *day*] The day when he was anointed king. If Nathan was (as is commonly supposed) Solomon's tutor, he had no doubt trained him to a consciousness of his high calling; and when in concert with Zadok he anointed him (1 Kings i. 34), he would not fail to impress upon him the significance of the rite. Comp. David's charge to him in 1 Chr. xxii. 6 ff.

have I begotten thee] *I* is the emphatic word in the clause, contrasting the new sonship by adoption with the existing sonship by natural relation. The recognition of Christ's eternal sonship in the Resurrection corresponds to the recognition of the king's adoptive sonship in the rite of anointing (Acts xiii. 33; Rom. i. 4).

8. *Ask of me*] Inheritance is the natural right of sonship. Yet even the son must plead the promise and claim its fulfilment. Dominion over the nations is not expressly mentioned in 2 Sam. vii.; but cp. Ps. lxxxix. 27.

inheritance ... possession] Words frequently applied to the gift of Canaan to Israel (Gen. xvii. 8; Deut. iv. 21, xxxii. 49). Now the world shall be his with equal right. Jehovah is king of the world, and

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;
Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.
Be wise now therefore, O ye kings:
Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
Serve the LORD with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest he be angry,

He offers His representative a world-wide dominion. Cp. lxxii. 8; Zech. ix. 9, 10.

9. *Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron*] A figure for the severity of the chastisement that awaits rebels. Or perhaps, 'an iron *sceptre*' (xlv. 6), symbol of a stern and irresistible rule. But the word rendered *break them*, if read with different vowels, may mean *rule* (lit. *shepherd*) *them*, so the LXX (and after it Rev. ii. 27; xii. 5; xix. 15), Syriac, and Jerome. In this case *rod* will mean a shepherd's *staff* (Mic. vii. 14), and the phrase will be an oxymoron.

a potter's vessel] An emblem of easy, complete, irreparable destruction. The confederacy is shattered into fragments which cannot be reunited. Cp. Jer. xix. 11; Is. xxx. 14; Prov. vi. 15.

10—12. The poet speaks, drawing the lesson from the great truths which have been set forth. There is a better way. Submission may avert destruction. The leaders of the nations are exhorted to be wise in time, and accept the sovereignty of Jehovah instead of resisting until His wrath is kindled.

10. *Be wise now therefore*] *Now therefore* should stand first, as in R.V., emphatically introducing the conclusion to be drawn from the statements of the preceding verses.

kings...judges of the earth] Not the rebel leaders of *v.* 2 exclusively, though the warning has a special significance for them, but all world-rulers. *Judges* = rulers generally, administration of justice being one of the most important functions of the king in early times. Cp. cxviii. 11; Prov. viii. 16.

11. *Serve*] The context indicates that political submission to Jehovah in the person of His representative is primarily intended. Cp. xviii. 43; lxxii. 11. But the wider meaning must not be excluded. *Serve* and *fear* are words constantly used with a religious meaning; and political submission to Israel is only the prelude to that spiritual submission of the nations to Jehovah, which is a constant element in the Messianic expectation of the O.T. Cp. xxii. 27, 28; lxvii. 7; c. 1 ff.; cii. 15; &c.

rejoice with trembling] There is no need to alter the reading to *tremble* (xcvi. 9) or to look for this meaning in the word rendered *rejoice*. Joyfulness tempered with reverent awe befits those who approach One so gracious yet so terrible. Cp. xcvii. 1; c. 2; Hos. iii. 5; xi. 10, 11; Heb. xii. 28. P.B.V. adds *unto him* with LXX and Vulg.

12. *Kiss the Son*] According to this rendering the exhortation to serve Jehovah is followed by an exhortation to pay homage to His

And ye perish *from* the way,

representative. For the *kiss* of homage cp. 1 Sam. x. 1; 1 Kings xix. 18; Job xxxi. 27; Hos. xiii. 2. But this rendering must certainly be abandoned. (1) Not to mention some minor difficulties, it assumes that the Psalmist has used the Aramaic word *bar* for son (cp. *Bar-jona*, *Bar-jesus*) instead of the usual Hebrew word *ben*. The only example of its use in the *Hebrew* of the O.T. (it is of course found in the *Aramaic* of Ezra and Daniel) is in Prov. xxxi. 2, a passage which contains other marked Aramaisms. No satisfactory reason has been suggested for its introduction here. We should not expect a poet to borrow a foreign word for *son* either for 'emphasis' or for 'euphony.'

(2) None of the ancient Versions, with the exception of the Syriac, give this sense to the words. They represent two views as to the meaning. (*a*) The LXX, and of course the Versions dependent on it, render, *Lay hold of instruction:* and similarly the Targum, *Receive instruction.* (*b*) Symmachus and Jerome render, *Worship purely;* and to the same effect, but with his usual bald literalism, Aquila gives, *Kiss choicely.*

The Syriac gives the meaning *Kiss the son:* but its rendering is merely a transcription of the Hebrew words. The reading of the Ambrosian MS., which agrees with the rendering of the LXX, is a correction by a later hand to the reading of the Hexaplar Syriac.

Jerome was acquainted with the translation *Worship the son*, but rejected it as doubtful. The passage in his treatise *against Ruffinus* (i. 19) deserves quotation. He had been charged with inconsistency for translating *Worship purely* (adorate pure) in his Psalter, though he had given *Worship the son* (adorate filium) in his Commentary. After discussing the possible meanings of the words he concludes thus: "Why am I to blame, if I have given different translations of an ambiguous word? and while in my short commentary where there is opportunity for discussion I had said *Worship the Son*, in the text itself, to avoid all appearance of forced interpretation, and to leave no opening for Jewish cavils, I have said, *Worship purely*, or *choicely;* as Aquila also and Symmachus have translated it."

It is however easier to shew that the rendering *Kiss the Son* is untenable, than to decide what rendering should be adopted. *Bar* (beside other senses inapplicable here) may mean *choice*, or, *pure*. Hence some commentators have adopted the renderings *Worship the chosen one:* or, *Worship in purity* (cp. xviii. 20, 24; xxiv. 3—5). But the substantial agreement of the LXX and Targum points to the existence of a widely-spread early tradition as to the sense, and on the whole it seems best to follow their general direction and render, *Embrace instruction*, or perhaps, *obedience*. No rendering is free from difficulty, and it may be doubted whether the text is sound. But an exaggerated importance has frequently been attached to the words. The uncertainty as to their meaning does not affect the general drift of the Psalm, or its Messianic interpretation.

lest he be angry] The subject of the verb is Jehovah Himself. The verb is applied to God in all the thirteen passages where it occurs.

When his wrath is kindled but a little:
Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him.

perish from *the way*] Rather, as R.V., **perish in the way**: find that your expedition leads only to ruin. Cp. i. 6. P.B.V. adds *right* from the LXX (ἐξ ὁδοῦ δικαίας).

when his wrath is kindled but a little] Better, **For quickly** (or *easily*) **may his anger blaze forth.** *Kindled* fails to give the idea of the Divine wrath blazing up to *consume* all adversaries. Cp. lxxxiii. 14 f.; Is. xxx. 27.

Blessed are *all they that put their trust in him*] Rather, **Happy are all they that take refuge in him**: lit. seek asylum or shelter: cp. Jud. ix. 15; Ruth ii. 12 (R.V.); Ps. vii. 1; lvii. 1. Here primarily, those are congratulated who place themselves under His protectorate by accepting the suzerainty of His king; but as in the preceding verse, the deeper spiritual sense must not be excluded. Cp. xxxiv. 8. Nah. i. 7 combines the thought with that of i. 6 *a*.

PSALM III.

The third and fourth Psalms are closely connected and should be studied together. The one is a morning hymn, after a night spent safely in the midst of danger (iii. 5); the other an evening hymn, when the danger, though less imminent, has not passed away (iv. 8). The spirit and the circumstances are the same: there are resemblances of language and of structure. Compare iii. 1 ("they that distress me") with iv. 1 ("in distress"); iii. 2 with iv. 6 ("there be many that say" is an expression peculiar to these two Psalms); iii. 3 with iv. 2; iii. 5 with iv. 8; and on the structure of Ps. iv see below. They are clearly the work of the same author, in the same crisis of his life. That author is in high position (iii. 6) and speaks with a tone of authority (iv. 2 ff.); he is attacked by enemies, not apparently foreigners (iii. 1, 6), whose project is profane and unprincipled (iv. 2, 4, 5): his cause is pronounced desperate (iii. 2), but with unshaken faith he appeals to the experience of past deliverances, and with absolute confidence casts himself upon Jehovah for protection and deliverance.

We can hardly be wrong in accepting the title which states that the third Psalm was written by David when he fled from Absalom his son, and the third Psalm carries the fourth with it. Of that flight a singularly graphic account is preserved in 2 Sam. xv—xviii. Read in the light of it, these Psalms gain in point and force and vividness. The peril of his position and the ingratitude of the people must be realised in order to estimate duly the strength of the faith and the generosity of feeling, to which these Psalms give expression. The absence of any reference to Absalom himself is thoroughly natural. Comp. 2 Sam. xviii. 33.

It has been suggested that the precise occasion of Ps. iii was the morning after the first night following upon David's flight from Jerusalem. That night however was spent in the passage of the Jordan, in consequence of Hushai's urgent message (2 Sam. xvii. 15–22),

and we must rather think of the morning after some night later on, perhaps the next, which had been marked by unexpected rest, in contrast to the sudden alarms of the previous night.

The fourth Psalm was written somewhat later, when David had had time to reflect on the true character of the rebellion; perhaps at Mahanaim, which was his head-quarters for some time.

The second Psalm describes the Kingdom of the Lord's Anointed threatened by enemies from without: the third and fourth tell of a time when it was in danger from intestine foes. All three alike are inspired by the conviction that human schemes are impotent to frustrate the Divine purpose.

The Psalm is divided into four stanzas, each, with the exception of the third, closed by a *Selah*.

i. The present distress, *vv.* 1, 2.
ii. God the source of help and protection, *vv.* 3, 4.
iii. Confidence in the midst of danger, *vv.* 5, 6
iv. Prayer for deliverance, and blessing on the people, *vv.* 7, 8.

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

3 LORD, how are they increased that trouble me!
Many *are* they that rise up against me.
2 Many *there be* which say of my soul,
There is no help for him in God. Selah.

1, 2. David lays his need before Jehovah. He is threatened by a rebellion which hourly gathers fresh adherents. His cause is pronounced utterly desperate.

1. *they...that trouble me*] R.V. mine adversaries: lit. *they that distress me*. Cp. iv. 1.

increased...many] "The conspiracy was strong; for the people *increased* continually with Absalom. And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom" (2 Sam. xv. 12, 13; cp. xvi. 15).

many are they that rise up against me] lit. *many are rising up against me*. The rebellion is in full progress and gathering strength. The phrase is used of enemies in general, but is specially appropriate to *insurgents* against the established government. Cp. 2 Sam. xviii. 31, 32.

2. Faint-hearted friends may be meant, as well as insolent enemies like Shimei, who professed to regard the king's calamities as the divine punishment for his past crimes (2 Sam. xvi. 8 ff.).

of my soul] The 'soul' in O. T. language is a man's 'self;' it represents him as a living, thinking, conscious individual.

help] Or, *salvation*, as in *v.* 8; where see note. Cp. 'save me' in *v.* 7. But the words 'soul' and 'salvation' are not primarily to be understood in a spiritual sense.

in God] As distinguished from men. All help, divine as well as human, fails him in his need. Hence the general term *God* is used.

But thou, O LORD, *art* a shield for me; 3
My glory, and the lifter up of mine head.
I cried unto the LORD *with* my voice, 4
And he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.
I laid me down and slept; 5
I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.
I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, 6

But where David expresses his own confident assurance (*v.* 8) or pleads for help (*v.* 4), he uses the covenant name Jehovah. The LXX however, which P.B.V. follows, reads, *in his God*.

3, 4. Men may say that God has forsaken him, but he knows that it is not so.

3. *a shield for me*] More significantly the original, a shield about me. A natural metaphor for a warrior-poet. Cp. God's promise to Abraham, Gen. xv. 1; Deut. xxxiii. 29; Ps. xviii. 2, &c.

my glory] The honour of the Israelite king was derived from Jehovah, whose representative he was. Cp. xxi. 5; lxii. 7; and see note on iv. 2. *My worship* (P.B.V.) = *my honour* or *glory*.

the lifter up of mine head] A general truth. David is still confident that as Jehovah raised him from low estate to royal dignity, and brought him up from depths of trouble in times past. He can even now save him and restore him to the throne. Cp. 2 Sam. xv. 25.

4. An appeal to past experiences of answered prayer. 'As often as I called,' the imperfect tense in the Heb. denotes repeated action or habit—'he answered me.' Cp. iv. 1; xci. 15.

out of his holy hill] Cp. ii. 6. Zion, the seat of the Ark of the covenant, which was the symbol and pledge of Jehovah's presence, is as it were the centre from which He exercises His earthly sovereignty. Cp. xiv. 7; xx. 2; Am. i. 2. There is possibly a tacit reference to the sending back of the Ark (2 Sam. xv. 25), which may have discouraged some of his followers. He would assure them that its absence does not diminish Jehovah's power to help.

5, 6. Not only past but present experience justifies this confidence.

5. The pronoun is emphatic:—*I*, pursued by enemies, despaired of by friends:—and the words refer to the actual experience of the past night. The calmness which could thus repose in the face of danger was a practical proof of faith.

sustained] R.V. sustaineth. The tense suggests the unceasing, ever active care by which he is upheld. The same word is used in xxxvii. 17, 24; lxxi. 6; cxlv. 14. Contrast xxvii. 2.

6. Cp. xxvii. 3. Numbers were on the side of Absalom, and but for the divinely sent infatuation which made him reject Ahithophel's clever advice, in all probability David's handful of followers would have been overwhelmed without effort (2 Sam. xvii. 1 ff.).

That have set *themselves* against me round about.
7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God:
For thou hast smitten all mine enemies *upon* the cheek bone;
Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.
8 Salvation *belongeth* unto the LORD:
Thy blessing *is* upon thy people. Selah.

set themselves *against me*] A private individual could hardly speak thus; and we are reminded of Ahithophel's counsel to strike one blow at the king, and save a civil war.

7, 8. The Psalm concludes with a prayer for deliverance as in times past, and for a blessing on the people.

7. *Arise, O LORD*] The opening words of the ancient marching-shout of Israel, rich in memories of deliverance and victory. See Num. x. 35. Cp. lxviii. 1.

for thou hast smitten] Again, as in v. 4, appeal is made to the experience of the past as the ground of prayer. Hitherto Jehovah has put His enemies to shame, and destroyed their power for mischief. The buffet on the cheek was a climax of insult which shewed that all spirit and power of resistance were gone. Cp. 1 Kings xxii. 24; Job xvi. 10; Lam. iii. 30; Mic. v. 1. Then, by a natural figure (how appropriate in David's mouth! cp. 1 Sam. xvii. 34), the wicked are pictured as ferocious wild beasts, rushing upon their prey, but suddenly deprived of their power to hurt. Cp. lviii. 6.

8. *Salvation*] R. V. marg. *victory* unduly limits the thought, though no doubt it is the particular form in which David desires to see Jehovah's saving power manifested. 'Save' is the constant prayer, 'salvation' the constant desire, of the Psalmists. The Hebrew words thus rendered denote primarily enlargement, liberation from a state of confinement and distress, power to move freely and at will, and so deliverance generally. Such deliverance comes from Jehovah alone: it is eagerly sought as the proof of His favour. It is, mainly at least, temporal and material, and is looked for in this life; for in the O. T. this life is the sphere of God's dealings with His people. But the word grows with the growth of revelation, till it gains an inexhaustible fulness of spiritual meaning in the N. T.

thy blessing is *upon thy people*] Rather as R.V., **thy blessing be upon thy people.** This prayer reveals the noble heart of the true king, to whom the welfare of his people is more than his own personal safety. Like Him of whom he was the type, he intercedes on behalf of the rebels, for 'thy people' cannot be limited to the loyal few. The whole nation is still Jehovah's people, though they have been misled into revolt against His king. As the sequel shewed, the revolt was the work of a party, not of the nation (2 Sam. xix. 9).

PSALM IV.

The occasion of this Psalm has already been discussed in the introduction to Ps. iii. Some days at least have elapsed. The immediate personal peril is past. Reflection has deepened David's consciousness of his own integrity, and his sense of the rebels' guilt. The Psalm breathes a spirit of righteous indignation, which rises completely above mere personal vindictiveness.

Its structure, if the indications afforded by the *Selah* at the end of *v.* 2 and *v.* 4 are to be followed, is similar to that of its companion Psalm.

i. Appeal to God, and remonstrance with the rebels, *vv.* 1, 2.
ii. The true character of the rebellion exposed, *vv.* 3, 4.
iii. The better way indicated, *vv.* 5, 6.
iv. The supreme joy of perfect trust, *vv.* 7, 8.

Most commentators however divide the Psalm thus: i. Appeal to God, *v.* 1; ii. Remonstrance with enemies, *vv.* 2—5; iii. The superiority of God-given joy to all earthly grounds of rejoicing, *vv.* 6—8. This division however neglects the Selah, which serves to emphasise the important thought of *v.* 3, and after *v.* 4 prepares the way for repentance following on reflection: it ignores the parallelism of structure with Ps. iii, and though at first sight attractive, fails to bring out the true connexion and sequence of the thoughts.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm of David.

Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: 4
Thou hast enlarged me *when I was* in distress;

The title should be rendered as in R.V., **For the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments.** See Introd. pp. xxi f., xxiv.

1, 2. An appeal to God, and an expostulation with men.

1. *Hear me* &c.] **When I call, answer me.** Cp. *v.* 3 and iii. 4. The LXX and Vulg. represent a different vocalisation and render, "when I called, the God of my righteousness answered me." This reading agrees well with the second clause of the verse, but on the whole the rhythm of the sentence is in favour of the Massoretic text.

O God of my righteousness] David is confident of the integrity of his heart and the justice of his cause. To God alone he looks to help him to his right, and vindicate his righteousness openly in the sight of men by making that cause triumphant. Cp. vii. 8 ff.; 1 Kings viii. 32.

thou hast enlarged me] R.V., **Thou hast set me at large.** But the words are perhaps best taken as a relative clause, *thou who hast set me at large;* giving a second reason for his appeal to God in the experience of past deliverances, possibly with particular reference to the events of the last few days. This natural figure for liberation from distress may be derived from the idea of an army which has been hemmed in by

Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

2 O ye sons of men, how long *will ye turn* my glory into shame?
How long will ye love vanity, *and* seek after leasing? Selah.

3 But know that the LORD hath set apart *him that is* godly
for himself:

enemies in some narrow pass escaping into the open plain. Cp. 1 Sam. xxiii. 26 for an illustration.

Have mercy upon me] Rather, as marg., be gracious unto me. The word suggests the free bestowal of favour rather than the exercise of forgiving clemency. It is connected with the word rendered 'gracious' in the fundamental passage Ex. xxxiv. 6. Cp. Ps. lxxxvi. 15.

2. *O ye sons of men*] From appealing to God he turns to remonstrate with the rebels, and singles out the leaders from the general mass. The phrase used is *bnē īsh*, which in xlix. 2 is rendered 'high,' and in lxii. 9, 'men of high degree,' in opposition to *bnē ādām*, rendered 'low' and 'men of low degree.' At the same time by calling them 'sons of men' he contrasts them with God, the defender of his cause.

my glory] There is no need to inquire whether David's personal honour or his royal dignity is meant. Both are included, for both were defamed and insulted. But it was an aggravation of the rebels' offence that the king had a special 'glory' as the representative of Jehovah. Cp. iii. 3, note.

vanity...leasing] The rebellion is *a vain thing*, destined to end in failure, like the threatened uprising of the nations (ii. 1): it is *a lie*, for it is based on the false principle of personal ambition setting itself up against the divinely appointed king. Cp. Is. xxviii. 15, 17. Another possible interpretation would refer the words to the false imputations and underhand intrigues by which Absalom and his confederates sought to tarnish David's reputation and undermine his authority. Cp. 2 Sam. xv. 2 ff. But the verbs used (*love...seek*) point rather to the end desired than to the means employed.

leasing] R.V. falsehood. *Leasing* (v. 6) is an obsolete word for a lie: from A.S. *leás*, empty, and so false: used by Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare. Cp. *Faerie Queene*, II. ii. 10:

> "Slaunderous reproches, and fowle infamies,
> Leasinges, backbytinges."

3, 4. The reason why the attempt is doomed to failure. Warning to reflect before it is too late.

3. *hath set apart*] *Hath distinguished.* The verb combines the idea of *marvellous dealing* with that of choice and separation. Cp. xvii. 7; cxxxix. 14; Is. xxix. 14.

him that is *godly*] The word *chāsīd* which is thus rendered is one of the characteristic words of the Psalter. It is derived from *chesed*, 'mercy' or 'lovingkindness,' and denotes either (1) one who is characterised by dutiful love to God and to his fellow-men; the 'godly,' or 'merciful' man, xviii. 25; or (2) 'one who is the object of Jehovah's lovingkind-

The LORD will hear when I call unto him.
Stand in awe, and sin not: 4
Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.
Selah.
Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, 5
And put your trust in the LORD.
There be many that say, Who will shew us *any* good? 6
LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

ness, as R.V. margin 'one that He favoureth': cp. A.V. marg., lxxxvi. 2. See Appendix, Note I, for a further discussion of its meaning.

4. Let wholesome fear, continues David, deter you from persisting in this course of action, which is nothing less than sinful. R.V. marg. gives the rendering of the LXX, "Be ye angry," i.e. If you must needs be angry and discontented with my government, do not be carried away by passion into open rebellion. The rendering is possible, for the word is used of the perturbation of wrath as well as of fear. But it gives a less obvious and suitable sense. The words are adopted (but not as an express quotation) by St Paul in his warning against resentment, Eph. iv. 26.

commune &c.] Lit. *speak in your heart.* The voice of conscience, unheeded in the turmoil and excitement of the day, or silenced by fear of men and evil example, may make itself heard in the calm solitude of the night, and convince you of the truth. Comp., though the turn of thought is different, lxiii. 6; cxlix. 5.

be still] Desist from your mad endeavour.

5. 6. After an interval for reflection indicated by the interlude (Selah) David points the malcontents among the people to the true source of prosperity.

5. *sacrifices of righteousness*] Sacrifices offered in a right spirit, cp. Deut. xxxiii. 19; Ps. li. 19. The rebels are still addressed. The sacrifices with which they pretended to hallow their cause (2 Sam. xv. 12) were a wretched hypocrisy, inasmuch as they were acting in opposition to the will of God. Let them approach Him in a right spirit, and instead of impatiently trying to remedy evils by revolution, rely entirely upon His guidance.

6. David knows well that there are plenty of discontented grumblers among his subjects, ready to follow anyone who makes them fair promises. His answer to them is a prayer for a blessing upon himself and his people (*u*), which recalls the great Aaronic benediction of Num. vi. 24—26, fusing into one the two petitions, "The LORD make His face to shine upon thee," "the LORD lift up His countenance upon thee." Cp. Ps. xxxi. 16; lxxx. 3, 7, 19.

The 'many', as in iii. 2, are chiefly the wavering mass of the people, who had not yet taken a side; but some at least of Absalom's partisans, and some of David's half-hearted followers are included.

7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart,
More than *in* the time *that* their corn and their wine increased.
8 I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep:
For thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

7, 8. A joy and peace which are independent of outward circumstances.

7. *more than* &c.] Lit. *more than* (the joy of) *the time of their corn and wine when they were increased:* i.e. more than their rejoicings for harvest and vintage even when they were most abundant: well expressed in R.V., **more than they have when their corn and their wine are increased**. The persons referred to may be either the malcontents, or men in general. The boisterous mirth of harvest and vintage rejoicings (Is. ix. 3; Jer. xlviii. 33) is the highest form of joy which they know whose desires are limited to earthly things; but deeper far is that inward joy which is the gift of God, for it is one of the fruits of the Spirit, Gal. v. 22; cp. Rom. xiv. 17.

The words gain fresh point when it is remembered that David was reduced to straits for the bare necessaries of life till he reached his hospitable friends at Mahanaim (2 Sam. xvii. 27—29).

8. **In peace will I lay me down and sleep at once**: no fears or anxieties delaying slumber. In iii. 5 he recorded his experience: here he gives expression to the trust which sprang from it.

for thou LORD, *only*] **For it is thou, LORD, alone, who** &c. This exquisite expression of absolute confidence, the rhythm of which in the original is as reposeful as the thought, gives an excellent sense in connexion with the context. 'Many' had declared that he was abandoned by God as well as man (iii. 2), but in unshaken faith he claims Jehovah as his sole protector, beside whom he needs no other.

But the word rendered 'alone' elsewhere means *apart*, when joined with verbs denoting dwelling. Thus it is used of Israel, isolated and separate from the nations, in Num. xxiii. 9; and in Deut. xxxiii. 28; Jer. xlix. 31, it is combined with the word here rendered 'in safety'. So probably the meaning is, 'It is Thou, LORD, who makest me dwell *apart* in safety:' isolated from my foes in Thy safe keeping. Hence R.V. marg. gives, *in solitude*.

PSALM V.

Another morning prayer, uttered by one who is exposed to danger from the machinations of unscrupulous and hypocritical enemies. The title assigns it to David, and he might have written thus when he was in the court of Saul, or shortly before the outbreak of Absalom's rebellion.

It has been urged that *v.* 7 assumes the existence of the Temple, and is therefore decisive against the Davidic authorship. This however is not certain. The term "house of the LORD" presents no difficulty.

It is used of the Tabernacle (Ex. xxiii. 19, xxxiv. 26; Deut. xxiii. 18; Josh. vi. 24; 1 Sam. i. 24, iii. 15), and also of the tent which David pitched for the ark on Mount Zion (2 Sam. xii. 20). But could this ark-tent be called a *temple*? The Heb. word *hêkāl* denotes a spacious building, whether temple or palace (Ps. xlv. 8, 15), and would not be a strictly appropriate designation for it. It is however applied to the sanctuary at Shiloh (1 Sam. i. 9, iii. 3), and may have remained in use, and been applied to the ark-tent in David's time. It should at any rate be noticed that in xxvii. 4, 6, 'house of the LORD,' 'temple,' and 'tent' (A.V. tabernacle) are all used in close juxtaposition.

It is moreover at least possible that here, as in xi. 4, xviii. 6, xxix. 9 (?), the temple is heaven, the dwelling-place of God, of which the earthly temple is but the symbol.

The Psalm opens with an urgent cry for a favourable hearing (1—3). Jehovah will not tolerate the wicked (4—6); but the Psalmist, through His lovingkindness, is admitted to His presence. He prays that he may be preserved from falling into the snares of his insidious foes (7—9); and that their just condemnation and punishment may exhibit a proof of God's righteous government which will cheer the hearts of His servants (10—12).

To the chief Musician upon Nehiloth, A Psalm of David.

Give ear to my words, O LORD, 5
Consider my meditation.
Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: 2
For unto thee will I pray.
My voice shalt thou hear *in* the morning, O LORD; 3

The title may be rendered with R.V., **For the Chief Musician; with the Nehiloth**, or, (marg.) *wind instruments*. See Introd. pp. xxi, xxiv.

1—3. Introductory petitions for a favourable hearing.

1. *my meditation*] The Heb. word, which occurs again only in xxxix. 3, may denote either the unspoken prayer of the heart (cp. the cognate verb in i. 2); or the low, murmuring utterance of brooding sorrow. Cp. Is. xxxviii. 14. So Jerome, *murmur meum*.

2. *my cry*] A word specially used of an imploring cry to God for help (xxii. 24; xxviii. 2; &c.).

my King, and my God] Cp. lxxxiv. 3. The language is all the more significant, if the petitioner was David. He appeals to Him, Whose chosen representative he was.

3. **O LORD, in the morning shalt thou hear my voice;**
In the morning will I order *my prayer* unto thee, and will keep watch. (R.V.).

'In the morning' is repeated with emphasis. The first thought of the day is prayer. Cp. lv. 17, lxxxviii. 13; lix. 16, xcii. 2, lvii. 8.

In the morning will I direct *my prayer* unto thee, and will look up.

4 For thou *art* not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness:
Neither shall evil dwell *with* thee.

5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight:

will I direct] Better, as R.V., **will I order.** The word means *to arrange*, and is used of setting in order the pieces of wood (Gen. xxii. 9; Lev. i. 7), or the parts of the sacrifice (Lev. i. 8), upon the altar. One of the first duties of the priests in the morning was to prepare the wood for the morning sacrifice, which was offered at sunrise (Lev. vi. 12; Num. xxviii. 4). Hence some commentators think that the Psalmist intends to compare his daily morning prayer to the daily morning sacrifice. Cp. cxli. 2. But the word 'order' has no exclusive or even predominant sacrificial reference; and we should probably rather compare the expressions 'to order one's words' or 'one's cause' in Job xxxii. 14, xxiii. 4, and the more closely parallel use of the word without an object in Job xxxiii. 5, xxxvii. 19.

and will look up] Rather, as R.V., **will keep watch,** for an answer, like a sentinel on the look out (2 Sam. xviii. 24). Cp. Micah vii. 7; Hab. ii. 1.

4—6. The ground of the Psalmist's confident expectation of an answer is the holiness of God, who will tolerate no evil. Comp. the ideal of an earthly king's court in Ps. ci.

4. *a God*] *El*, not *Elohim*. If the fundamental idea of this name for God is that of *power*[1], its use here is significant. Power without goodness is the fetishistic conception of deity, to which human nature is prone (l. 21).

neither shall evil dwell with *thee*] Rather, as R.V. marg., with the LXX, Vulg. and Jerome, **The evil man shall not sojourn with thee.** He cannot be (so to speak) God's guest, and enjoy the hospitality and protection which Oriental custom prescribes. See on xv. 1, and cp. lxi. 4. To sinners the divine holiness is a consuming fire which they cannot endure (Is. xxxiii. 14).

5, 6. Various classes of evil doers. *The foolish*, **or rather the arrogant,** a word denoting boastful blustering presumption rather than folly; cp. lxxiii. 3, lxxv. 4: *workers of iniquity*, the standing expression in the Psalms for those who make a practice of what is morally worthless (cp. John iii. 20, v. 29); those 'that speak lies' (for *leasing* see on iv. 2); cp. lviii. 3, vii. 14: **men of bloodshed and deceit,** who do not shrink from murder and that by treachery, in fact the Shimeis and Doegs and Ahithophels and Joabs of David's time.

shall not stand in thy sight] This may simply mean that they cannot impose upon God. He passes judgement on their hollow pretensions (cp. i. 5), and they shrink away condemned. But the idea is

[1] Attractive but questionable is Lagarde's explanation of the name *El* as 'the Being to Whom man turns,' the aim and end of all human longing and effort.

Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.
Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: 6
The LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.
But *as for* me, I will come *into* thy house in the multitude 7
of thy mercy:
And in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.
Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine 8
enemies;

probably rather of courtiers standing in the presence of a monarch. Cp. Prov. xxii. 29; Ps. ci. 7; and the picture of the heavenly council in Job i. 6, ii. 1.

will abhor] Abhorreth; a strong word: abominates, as something wholly unnatural and detestable.

7—9. In sharp contrast to the banishment of the wicked from God's presence is the Psalmist's freedom of access. He prays for the special guidance needed by one who is surrounded by insidious enemies.

7. *I will come* &c.] Better, as R.V., following the order of the original: in the multitude [or, *abundance*] of thy lovingkindness will I come into thy house. Cp. lxix. 13, 16, cvi. 7, 45. The wicked are excluded from Jehovah's presence by their own act; the godly man is admitted to it by Jehovah's grace. Note the contrast between "the multitude of thy lovingkindness," and "the multitude of their transgressions," *v.* 10.

and *in thy fear*] Omit *and*. Fear, reverent awe, is the right spirit for approach to a holy God. Cp. ii. 11; Heb. xii. 28, 29.

will I worship] The Heb. word means *to prostrate one's self*, the Oriental attitude of reverence to a superior or supplication (Gen. xviii. 2); hence in general, of the corresponding disposition of mind, *to worship*. The Psalmist worships facing the sanctuary which was the outward sign of Jehovah's presence among His people. Or is the heavenly temple meant? (1 Kings viii. 22).

8. The prayer for guidance which is the main object and central thought of the Psalm.

Lead me...in thy righteousness] i.e. because Thou art righteous. A comparison of xxiii. 3; Prov. viii. 20; xii. 28; might incline us to understand the meaning to be, 'Lead me in the path of right conduct which Thou hast marked out for me:' but the true parallels are xxxi. 1, lxxi. 2, cxix. 40, cxliii. 1, 11; which shew clearly that God's own righteousness is meant. One element of that righteousness is faithfulness to His saints in the fulfilment of covenant promises, and to this the Psalmist appeals.

because of mine enemies] A peculiar word found only in xxvii. 11, liv. 5, lvi. 2, lix. 10. Render, as in R.V. margin, them that lie in wait for me, like fowlers (Jer. v. 26. R.V.), or a leopard for its prey (Hos. xiii. 7). He prays that he may be preserved from falling into their snares.

Make thy way straight before my face.
9 For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth;
Their inward *part is* very wickedness;
Their throat *is* an open sepulchre;
They flatter with their tongue.
10 Destroy thou them, O God;
Let them fall by their own counsels;
Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions;
For they have rebelled against thee.
11 But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice:

make thy way straight before] Or, as P.B.V. and R.V., **plain**. The word means both *level* and *straight*. The godly man's life is a path marked out for him by God (xvii. 5, lxxiii. 24, lxxxvi. 11). He prays that it may be such that he may be in no danger of stumbling or losing his way. 'Bring us not into temptation.'

9. The reason for the Psalmist's special need of guidance is the treacherous character of his enemies. There is no stedfastness, nothing upon which he can depend, in their talk: their inmost heart is bent on destruction (lit. *is destructions*, or perhaps, as R.V. marg., *a yawning gulf*): their throat, the instrument of speech (cxv. 7, cxlix. 6), threatens death like an open grave, though their words are so smooth and specious.

10—12. As he calls to mind their malice he can no longer refrain, but breaks out into urgent prayer that sentence may be passed upon them as guilty of high treason against God; that so, in the triumph of the right, the godly may rejoice in God's favour and protection. On such prayers see Introduction, p. lxxxviii ff.

10. *Destroy thou them, O God*] R.V., **Hold them guilty**; punish them; for it is by visible failure and disaster that their condemnation is to be made known.

let them fall by their own counsels] Let their own machinations recoil on their heads and bring them to ruin. Cp. 2 Sam. xv. 31. Better so than as margin, *fall from*, i.e. *fail in*, *their counsels*. Cp. lxiv. 8.

cast them out] As no longer worthy to dwell in the land: or, **thrust them down** from the position which they occupy. Cp. lxii. 4; xxxvi. 12.

for they have rebelled against thee] Rebellion against the king was in a special way rebellion against Jehovah, whose representative he was. But it may refer quite generally to their defiance of divine authority, and their persecution of God's servant.

11. We may render more exactly:

So shall all those that take refuge in thee rejoice,
They shall ever shout for joy while thou protectest them,
And they that love thy name shall exult in thee.

Let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them:
Let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.
For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous;
With favour wilt thou compass him as *with* a shield. 12

The punishment of the wicked according to their deeds is an occasion for the universal rejoicing of the godly. Not only do they sympathise with their fellow-saint in his deliverance, but they see in it a vindication of Jehovah's righteous government, and an assurance that those who have put themselves under His protection will not find their confidence misplaced.

that love thy name] Cp. lxix. 36, cxix. 132. 'The Name of Jehovah' is the compendious expression for His character and attributes as He has revealed them to men. See Oehler's *O.T. Theology*, § 56. Needs must those who love Him as He has revealed Himself rejoice when He proves Himself true to His promises.

defendest them] Protectest, or shelterest them; in Thy secret pavilion (xxvii. 5, xxxi. 20); or, under Thy outspread wings (xci. 4).

12. The R.V. follows the Massoretic punctuation in transferring LORD to the second half of the verse:

O LORD, thou wilt compass him with favour as with a shield.

a shield] A buckler, or large shield to protect the whole body. Cp. xxxv. 2, xci. 4; 1 Sam. xvii. 7. From 1 Kings x. 16, 17 it would seem that the 'buckler' (A.V. 'target') was about double the size of the 'shield.'

PSALM VI.

The Psalmist has been suffering from severe and long-continued sickness, which has brought him to the brink of the grave. The most bitter part of his trial is that he feels it to be a token of God's displeasure; and malicious enemies aggravate his suffering by taunting him with being forsaken by God.

This is the natural view of the Psalmist's situation. Many however think that the attacks of enemies are his chief and primary ground of complaint, though these have wrought upon him until mental anxiety has produced actual sickness. But it is plain from *vv.* 1—3 that he is suffering from a *direct* divine visitation, and that the persecution of which he complains (*v.* 7) is a consequence and aggravation of it. Suffering and misfortune were popularly regarded (as we learn from the Book of Job) as evidences of commensurate guilt on the part of the sufferer. Hence when the godly suffered, he became a butt for the scornful taunts of the godless. Cp. Ps. xli.

The title assigns the Psalm to David. Some, wrongly supposing that the hostility of enemies is the chief ground of complaint, would refer it to the time when he was persecuted by Saul: others think that this and some other Psalms were the outcome of a dangerous illness from which he suffered in the interval between his sin with Bathsheba and Absalom's rebellion. The fact is that here, as in many other Psalms, there is little or nothing to fix the author or even the period to

which the Psalm belongs. This however is clear, that the Psalm is the record of a personal experience, not the utterance of the nation in a time of calamity, personified as a sick and persecuted sufferer. Comp. Ps. xxx, which is a corresponding thanksgiving.

This Psalm is the first of the seven known from ancient times in the Christian Church as 'the Penitential Psalms' (vi, xxxii, xxxviii, li, cii, cxxx, cxliii). They are all prescribed for use on Ash Wednesday, the 51st in the Commination Service, and the remaining six as Proper Psalms.

The Psalm falls into three divisions:

i. The cry of anguish for relief in suffering, 1—3.

ii. Earnest yet calmer pleading for deliverance, 4—7.

iii. Triumphant assurance of answered prayer and restoration to God's favour, 8—10.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith, A Psalm of David.

6 O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger,
Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.
2 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I *am* weak:
O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.

The title should be rendered as in R.V., **For the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments, set to the Sheminith** (or, *the eighth*). See Introd. pp. xxi, xxiv f.

1—3. The Psalmist pleads for mercy, deprecating the severity of God's visitation.

1. The emphasis in the original lies on the words *not in Thine anger, neither in Thy hot displeasure*. The Psalmist pleads that his present suffering exceeds the measure of loving correction (Job v. 17; Prov. iii. 11, 12; Jer. x. 24; Rev. iii. 19). He can only interpret it as a sign that the wrath of God is resting upon him. Perhaps, like Job, he can detect no special sin to account for it. At least it is noteworthy that the Psalm contains no explicit confession of sin, and in this respect it is a remarkable contrast to the kindred Ps. xxxviii, which opens with the same words.

2. *Have mercy upon me*] Be gracious unto me. See note on iv. 1.

I am weak] R.V., I am withered away, retaining the primary meaning of the word. Cp. Nah. i. 4, where it is rendered *languisheth*.

heal me] So Jeremiah prays (xvii. 14), combining this petition with that of *v.* 4. Cp. Job v. 18; Ps. xxx. 2; xli. 4; cxlvii. 3.

for my bones are vexed] Even the solid framework of the body, the seat of its strength and solidity, is racked and shaken well nigh to dissolution. Cp. xxii. 14. 'The bones,' in the language of Hebrew poetry, denote the whole physical organism of the living man, as being the fundamental part of it. Hence they are the seat of health (Prov. xvi. 24), or of pain, as here. In some passages, 'the bones' come to be identified with the man himself, as a living agent. Cp. xxxv. 10. On the word 'vexed,' see note on ii. 5.

My soul is also sore vexed : 3
But thou, O LORD, how long?
Return, O LORD, deliver my soul : 4
O save me for thy mercy's sake.
For in death *there is* no remembrance of thee : 5
In the grave who shall give thee thanks?

3. Mind as well as body, the inner self as well as its outer organism, is dismayed. Our Lord appropriates these words, in view of His approaching Passion (John xii. 27), using the Greek word (*ταράσσειν*) employed by the LXX.

how long?] Cp. xc. 13. How pregnant is the aposiopesis! How long wilt Thou be angry? How long wilt Thou hide Thy face and refuse to hear me? Cp. xiii. 1.

It is recorded of Calvin in his last painful illness that he uttered no word of complaint unworthy of a Christian man; only raising his eyes to heaven he would say *Usquequo Domine* (Lord, how long?) for even when he was in health, this was a kind of watchword with him, in reference to the troubles of the brethren (*Vita: Opp.* Tom. I).

4—7. He renews his prayer, and in a calmer tone, reasons with God.

4. *Return*] For Jehovah seems to have abandoned him. Cp. xc. 13.

O save me for thy mercy's sake] R.V., save me for thy lovingkindness' sake. Jehovah declares Himself to be "a God...plenteous in *lovingkindness* and truth, who keeps *lovingkindness* for thousands" (Ex. xxxiv. 7, 8), and the Psalmist intreats Him to be true to this central attribute in His own revelation of His character.

5. A further plea. There can be no gain in his death. Nay, Jehovah will be the loser by it. For man is created to praise God, and God delights in his praise. But in the state to which man passes at death, he can no longer gratefully call to mind His goodness (cxlv. 7), or celebrate His praise.

Here, as in xxx. 9, lxxxviii. 10—12, cxv. 17 (cp. Is. xxxviii. 18 ff.; the Book of Job; Eccles. ix. 5, vi. 10); we meet with that dreary despairing view of the state after death, which the Hebrews shared with the rest of the ancient world. They did not look forward to annihilation, but to a dreamy, shadowy, existence which did not deserve the name of life. The dead, they thought, were cut off from all activity and enjoyment, and worst of all, from the consciousness of God's presence, and from that communion with Him, which is the essence of 'life' (xxx. 5). It is hardly possible for us who live in the light of Christ's Resurrection (2 Tim. i. 10), to realise what the lifelong slavery to the fear of death (Heb. ii. 15) meant to the faithful Israelite, and the bold struggles of his faith to break the fetters. See Introd. p. xciii ff.

in the grave] It is far better, with the R.V., to retain the Hebrew word Shĕōl to denote the abode of the departed. It is the O.T. equivalent of *Hades*, by which it is rendered in the LXX. It was thought

6 I am weary with my groaning;
All the night make I my bed to swim;
I water my couch with my tears.
7 Mine eye is consumed because of grief;
It waxeth old because of all mine enemies.
8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity;
For the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.
9 The LORD hath heard my supplication;
The LORD will receive my prayer.
10 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed:
Let them return *and* be ashamed suddenly.

of as a vast subterranean abyss, where all alike were gathered; a place of gloom and silence, but withal of rest, however joyless, for its shadowy denizens have no more power to do harm than good. "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest." Cp. Job iii. 13—19; Is. xiv. 9 ff. See Oehler's *O.T. Theology*, § 78.

6. *I am weary with my groaning*] So Baruch complained, Jer. xlv. 3, R. V. Cp. Ps. lxix. 3.

all the night] Rather, every night. His sorrow is of long continuance, and knows no respite.

7. **Mine eye is wasted away because of provocation;**
It is waxed old because of all mine adversaries.

With the first clause comp. xxxi. 9. The look of the eye is a sure indication of the state of health, mental and bodily. The word rendered *adversaries* means literally *them that distress me*. Cp. vii. 4, 6; and the cognate words in iii. 1, iv. 1.

8—10. The cloud breaks. Heaviness is turned to joy. With a sudden inspiration of faith the Psalmist realises that his prayer is heard, and predicts the speedy confusion of his enemies.

8. *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity*] Words used by our Lord, Matt. vii. 23.

9. Twice he repeats the confident assertion of faith, that Jehovah has heard his prayer, and with equal confidence adds the assurance that He will accept it favourably, and not reject it. Cp. 1 John v. 14, 15.

10. It is better to render the verbs as future:

All mine enemies shall be ashamed and sore vexed;
They shall turn back, they shall be ashamed in a moment.

The 'dismay', which he had felt to be a token of divine displeasure (*vv.* 2, 3), is now retorted upon those who took a malicious delight in his misfortunes. When God returns to His servant, his assailants are repulsed in sudden and ignominious defeat. Cp. xxxv. 4, 26, lvi. 9, lxxxiii. 17.

PSALM VII.

The Psalmist is assailed by ruthless enemies who are bent upon taking his life, charging him with heinous crimes. He solemnly protests entire innocence, and appeals to God as the supreme Judge to vindicate his cause.

The title gives a clue to the circumstances under which the Psalm was written. It is called "*Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the* LORD, *concerning the words of Cush a Benjamite.*" *Shiggaion* (see Introd. p. xx) probably denotes a poem of passionate ecstatic character, written under the influence of strong emotion, and reflecting its origin in its form.

Cush is not mentioned elsewhere. It is plain however that he was one of those fellow tribesmen and close adherents of Saul, who insinuated that David was intriguing against the king's life (1 Sam. xxii. 8) and by their baseless calumnies further inflamed his already irritated mind. Of such slanderers David complains in 1 Sam. xxiv. 9, xxvi. 19. Cush is simply a proper name not otherwise known to us. There is no reason for taking it to mean *a Cushite* or *Ethiopian* (*super verba Aethiopis*, Jerome); or as a by-name for Saul himself as *a black-hearted man* (though the identification of Cush with Saul is as old as the Targum); still less for identifying Cush with Shimei.

The fact that Cush is not elsewhere mentioned shews that the title is of great antiquity. It comes, if not from David himself, at least from an editor who possessed fuller information about David's history, either in still living tradition, or in writings such as those mentioned in 1 Chr. xxix. 29.

The Psalm belongs then to that period of David's life, when he was hunted from place to place by Saul; and it strikingly reflects the characteristic feelings of that time as they are portrayed in the Book of Samuel. 1 Sam. xxi—xxvi, especially xxiv and xxvi, should be read in illustration of it. Compare particularly the reference to slanders in the title with 1 Sam. xxiv. 9, xxvi. 19: the virulence of persecution described in *vv.* 1, 2 with 1 Sam. xx. 1, 31, xxiii. 15, &c.: the protestations of innocence in *vv.* 3, 4 with 1 Sam. xx. 1, xxiv. 10, 11, 17, xxvi. 18, 23, 24: the appeal to God as Judge in *vv.* 6, 8 with 1 Sam. xxiv. 12, 15.

The energy and vigour of the Psalm correspond to the circumstances. Pressing danger, the rankling sense of injustice, a strong faith in the judicial righteousness of God, are its inspiring motives.

Ancient Jewish tradition prescribes it for use on the feast of Purim.

The Psalm falls into two principal divisions, the first mainly personal, the second general:

i. David's prayer for God's intervention on his behalf, *vv.* 1—10.

After an appeal setting forth the urgency of his need (1, 2) and a solemn protestation of his innocence of the crimes laid to his charge (3—5), David prays God to appear as Judge, and publicly do him justice (6—8). A prayer for the triumph of righteousness, and a con-

ndent expression of trust in God, (*v*. 10) close the first part, and form the transition to the second part.

ii. The judicial activity of God, *vv.* 11—17.

God unceasingly executes vengeance on the wicked (11—13); and wickedness works its own punishment (14—16). Concluding ascription of praise to Jehovah for this manifestation of His righteousness (17).

Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the LORD, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite.

7 O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust:
Save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me:
2 Lest he tear my soul like a lion,
Rending *it* in pieces, while *there is* none to deliver.
3 O LORD my God, if I have done this;
If there be iniquity in my hands;
4 If I have rewarded evil *unto* him that was at peace with me;

1, 2. The Psalmist's cry for help, based on Jehovah's relation to him.

1. *in thee do I put my trust*] In thee have I taken refuge. See note on ii. 12, and comp. the opening words of Pss. xi, xvi, xxxi, lvii, lxxi; and cxli. 8. David has put himself under Jehovah's protection, and appeals to Him on the ground of this covenant relationship between them. *In thee* is emphatic.

all them that persecute me] R.V., all them that pursue me. Saul and his followers. Cp. 1 Sam. xxiii. 28, xxiv. 14, xxv. 29, xxvi. 18.

2. His enemies are many, but one is conspicuous above all for merciless ferocity. Cush, or perhaps Saul himself, is meant (1 Sam. xx. 1). For the simile cp. x. 9, xvii. 12, xxii. 13, 21.

my soul] My life: me regarded as a living individual.

3—5. The appeal for help is supported by a solemn protestation of innocence. If he is guilty of the crimes laid to his charge, may he be surrendered to the utmost fury of his enemies.

3. *if I have done this*] 'This' refers to the crimes of which he was falsely accused by Cush, and is further explained in the two following lines.

if there be iniquity in my hands] Wrong as the opposite of right: what is crooked and distorted: a different word from that used in *v*. 14 and in v. 5. Compare the closely similar language of David's protest in 1 Sam. xxiv. 11, "Know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand:" and 1 Sam. xxvi. 18, "What have I done? or what evil is in mine hand?"

4. *If I have rewarded evil* &c.] If I have been guilty of unprovoked outrage, such, it is perhaps implied, as that of which Saul is guilty toward me (1 Sam. xxiv. 17). This is probably right; but another possible rendering deserves mention: *If I have requited him*

(Yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy:)
Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take *it*; 5
Yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth,
And lay mine honour in the dust. Selah.
Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, 6

that rewarded me evil; i.e. taken revenge into my own hands. Cp. David's solemn disclaimer of such conduct in 1 Sam. xxiv. 12.

Yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy] R.V., him that without cause was mine adversary, as in *v.* 6. See on vi. 7. The clause is a parenthesis, asserting that his conduct had been the very opposite of that which was attributed to him. Far from committing unprovoked outrages, he had saved the life of his enemy, and that though the enemy's hostility to him was causeless. The words refer to the occasions in the cave and in the camp, when David prevented his followers from taking Saul's life (1 Sam. xxiv. 4 ff.; xxvi. 8 ff.). The construction is bold, but it is thoroughly in keeping with the style of the Psalm, with its passionate protestations of innocence; and there is no need to adopt an unsupported meaning of the word for 'deliver,' and render, not as a parenthesis but in direct continuation of the preceding clause, *and have spoiled him that without cause was mine adversary*, with a supposed reference to 1 Sam. xxiv. 4, 5, or xxvi. 11: or to alter the text by transposing two letters, so as to mean: *and oppressed mine adversary without cause.*

5. Render:

Let an enemy pursue my soul and overtake it;
Yea, trample my life to the ground,
And make my glory to dwell in the dust.

With the first line comp. Ex. xv. 9, echoed again in Ps. xviii. 37. The last line might mean only, 'degrade my dignity, treat me with insult and ignominy;' but the parallelism of 'my soul,' 'my life,' 'my glory,' is decisive in favour of interpreting 'my glory' to mean 'my soul,' as in xvi. 9; xxx. 12; lvii. 8. The 'soul' is so designated either as the noblest part of man, or as the image of the divine glory. 'The dust' will then be 'the dust of death.' Cp. xxii. 15; and the exact parallel 'dwellers in the dust,' Is. xxvi. 19. David then invokes death by an enemy's hand if he is guilty, and death, as the language implies, with every circumstance of violence and disgrace.

6—8. Conscious of his integrity, David appeals to Jehovah, as the Judge of the world, to hold an assize, and vindicate his innocence.

6. *Arise...lift up thyself...awake*] Cp. iii. 7, ix. 19, x. 12, xliv. 23, xciv. 2, and many similar invocations; couched in human language, as though God could be an otiose spectator, or even like a sentinel negligently slumbering on his watch, though the Psalmists well knew that Israel's watchman neither slumbered nor slept (cxxi. 3, 4).

in thine anger] Cp. vi. 1. Holiness and Justice can only be manifested as anger in their judicial relation to sin and wrong.

Lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies:
And awake for me *to* the judgment *that* thou hast commanded.
7 So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about:
For their sakes therefore return thou on high.
8 The LORD shall judge the people:
Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness,

because of the rage of mine enemies] Or, against the ragings of mine adversaries.

and awake for me to *the judgment* that *thou hast commanded*] The R.V., **and awake for me; thou hast commanded judgement,** represents the abruptness of the original. The exact turn of the thought is obscure. Perhaps, with a sudden intuition of faith, David realises that his prayer for God's interposition is answered, and, so to speak, the commission issued for holding the assize which he proceeds to describe in *vv.* 7, 8. Or the words may give the ground of his prayer: 'arise, inasmuch as judgement is Thy ordinance and function' (Gen. xviii. 25).

7. Render:

And let the assembly of peoples come round about thee:
And over it return thou on high.

The judgement scene. The Psalmist prays that 'the peoples' may be summoned to stand round the tribunal. It is a general summons. No distinction is made between Israel and other nations. Jehovah is exercising His judicial functions in their fullest extent as the Judge of all the earth.

The second line is difficult. There is much authority in favour of the interpretation, 'Return to heaven, when the judgement is finished, soaring away above the vast throng and vanishing to Thy abode on high, thus proving that Thou art the supreme Judge of all.'

This explanation no doubt presents a grand poetic picture; but it is clearly untenable, for no mention has yet been made of the judgement, and *v.* 8 goes on to speak of it as in progress. It is best (if the Massoretic text is retained) to explain: 'once more occupy the throne of judgement above the assembly, resume the judicial functions which seem for a time to have been abandoned.' But it is doubtful if the word 'return' fairly yields this sense, and it is probable that we should change the vowel points, and read *sit* instead of *return*. 'Over it take Thy seat on high' upon the throne of judgement, gives precisely the sense needed by the context. Comp. the parallels in the closely related Ps. ix., *vv.* 4, 7.

8. Render as R.V.:

The LORD ministereth judgement to the peoples.

Jehovah has taken His seat and opened the assize (cp. the exactly similar sequence of ideas in ix. 7, 8: and see Is. iii. 13, 14, R.V.): and the Psalmist comes forward with a plea to have justice done him.

judge me] Here as elsewhere, of a judgement favourable to the petitioner (xxvi. 1, xxxv. 24, xliii. 1, lxxxii. 3): 'do me justice.' David

And according to mine integrity *that is* in me.
O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but 9
establish the just:
For the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.
My defence *is* of God, 10
Which saveth the upright in heart.
God judgeth the righteous, 11

challenges a decision according to his righteousness and his integrity; not that he would claim to be perfect and sinless, but he has "a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men," and protests his innocence of the charges of treachery which have been brought against him. See Introduction, p. lxxxvii ff. Comp. 1 Sam. xxvi. 23 (R.V.).

that is *in me*] The marg. alternative of R.V., *be it unto me*, is suggested to meet a difficulty in the usage of the preposition, which commonly means *upon*. But the rendering of the text can be defended as a well established idiom, of which examples will be found in xlii. 6, 11; or we may render *upon me*, and regard righteousness and integrity as a cloak which envelopes the Psalmist. Cp. Job xxix. 14.

9, 10. His own personal need is but one small part of the great cause, and he passes on to pray for the larger hope of the universal destruction of evil and triumph of the righteous.

9. More exactly:

O that the evil of wicked men might come to an end, and that thou wouldest establish the righteous;
For a trier of hearts and reins is God the righteous.

The last clause adds the ground upon which the hope and prayer of the first clause is based. God is righteous, and He is a discerner of hearts; there can therefore be no doubt of His will and His ability to distinguish between the righteous and the wicked by an impartial judgement. Cp. 1 Sam. xvi. 7; Is. xi. 3. 4. According to the ancient exegetical tradition represented by the Hebrew accents (Wickes' *Treatise on the Accentuation* &c., p. 43), the first clause should be rendered, *O let evil make an end of the wicked*, and it is certainly a striking truth that the punishment of the wicked springs out of their own misdeeds: comp. *vv.* 14 ff., and perhaps xxxiv. 21: but the sense given by the LXX, Jerome, and the English Versions is probably right.

trieth the hearts and reins] A favourite thought with Jeremiah: see ch. xi. 20. xvii. 10, xx. 12; cp. Rev. ii. 23. The heart is regarded in the O.T. as the organ of thought and will, which determines the man's moral and religious character, the reins (kidneys) as the seat of the emotions: see Delitzsch, *Biblical Psychology*, § xiii.; and Oehler, *Old Testament Theology*, § 71.

10. *My defence* is *of God*] R.V., **my shield is with God.** Lit. *my shield is upon God;* it rests with God to defend me. Cp. lxii. 7.

11—13. The theme of the judicial righteousness of God, in all its certainty and terribleness, is further developed.

And God is angry *with the wicked* every day.
12 If he turn not, he will whet his sword;
He hath bent his bow, and made it ready.
13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death;
He ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.
14 Behold, he travaileth with iniquity,
And hath conceived mischief,
And brought forth falsehood.

11. Render with R. V.:

God (*Elohim*) is a righteous judge,
Yea, a God (*El*) that hath indignation every day.

Whatever men may think (x. 4, 11, 13), God's judicial wrath against evil never rests. The addition *strong and patient* in P.B.V. is derived from the LXX through the Vulgate. *strong* being a rendering of *El*, and *patient* a gloss.

12. If a man turn not from his evil way and repent. God 'will whet his sword:' nay, He has already strung His bow and made it ready to discharge the arrow of punishment. God is described under the figure of a warrior, armed with sword and bow to execute vengeance on the wicked. Cp. Deut. xxxii. 41, 42. The tenses of the first clause represent the judgement as in process of preparation from time to time; those of the second clause as ready to be launched against the offender at any moment. The wicked aim their arrows at the upright in heart (xi. 2), but 'the saviour of the upright in heart' aims *His* arrows at them and frustrates their plots.

R.V. marg. *Surely he will again whet his sword* is a possible but less satisfactory rendering. *vv.* 12, 13 may then be referred either to God, or to the enemy intending to renew his attack.

13. Render:

Yea at him hath he aimed deadly missiles;
Making his arrows fiery.

Or, *Yea, for him hath he prepared* &c.

The description of the warrior-judge is continued. God's arrows are His lightnings (xviii. 14; Zech. ix. 14), which He aims at the impenitent sinner. There may be a reference to the fire-darts of ancient warfare (Lat. *malleoli*), arrows with tow, pitch, and other inflammable materials attached to them, lighted and discharged into a besieged town with the object of setting it on fire. Cp. 'the fire-charged darts of the evil one,' Eph. vi. 16.

14—16. The punishment of the wicked described from another point of view as the natural result of his own actions. He falls into the snare which he laid for others.

14. Render the second line,

Yea he conceiveth mischief and bringeth forth falsehood.

Words of studied ambiguity are chosen, ironically describing the action of the wicked man in its intention and its result. The 'iniquity'

He made a pit, and digged it, 15
And is fallen into the ditch *which* he made.
His mischief shall return upon his own head, 16
And his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.
I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: 17
And will sing *praise* to the name of the LORD most High.

(lit. *worthlessness*: see on v. 5) which he laboriously plans is destined to prove vanity and failure: the 'mischief' which he conceives for others issues in calamity for himself: the resultant 'falsehood' deceives not others but himself. Cp. for the figure, Job xv. 35; Is. xxxiii. 11, lix. 4.

15. More exactly:

He hath dug a pit and delved it deep,
And is fallen into the ditch he was making.

Another picture of the destruction of the wicked. He 'is snared in the work of his own hands' (ix. 16). The figure is taken from the pitfalls used by hunters. See Ezek. xix. 4; and cp. lvii. 6; Eccl. x. 8. Observe the graphic force of the tense in the last line. His schemes for the destruction of others prove his own ruin even before he has completed them.

16. The certain recoil of evil upon the evil-doer. Cp. 1 Sam. xxv. 39: and the figures in Prov. xxvi. 27, and Ecclus. xxvii. 25, "Whoso casteth a stone on high casteth it on his own head."

17. A closing doxology.

I will praise the LORD] R.V., **I will give thanks unto the LORD.** The idea conveyed by this word, so characteristic of the Psalter, is that of the *acknowledgement* due from man to God for His goodness. Hence the rendering of the LXX, ἐξομολογήσομαι, and of the Vulg., *confitebor*.

according to his righteousness] Manifested and vindicated in the judgment of the wicked.

the name of the LORD *Most High*] Since He has thus revealed Himself in His character of Supreme Governor of the world. On the title *Most High* see Appendix, Note II.

PSALM VIII.

It is the marvel of God's choice of man to be the chief revelation of Himself and His representative on earth that is the theme of this Psalm. Although God's glory is so conspicuously stamped upon the heavens, He makes infants the defenders of His cause (1, 2). The infinite vastness of the heavens would seem to make a puny creature like man beneath God's notice (3, 4). Not so, for He has made him in His own image, and appointed him His viceroy over creation (5, 6), in all its varied forms of life (7, 8).

Man then, not Nature, is the central thought in the poet's mind. It is indeed the contemplation of the heavens with all their wealth of mystery and magnificence which by the law of contrast has turned his gaze to man. Nature is wonderful as the reflection of God's glory, but man is more wonderful still. Mere atom as he seems to be compared with those starry depths (and what force modern astronomical discovery adds to the contrast), he is in truth more mysterious and wonderful than they, for he is by nature scarce less than God, and appointed to be His viceroy in the world. Man's dignity is the true marvel of the universe.

The Psalmist looks away from the Fall with its heritage of woe, from the sin and failure and rebellion of mankind, to man's nature and position and destiny in the original purpose of God. And was he not justified in doing so? The image of God in man is defaced but not destroyed (1 Cor. xi. 7; St James iii. 9); the grant of dominion is not abrogated (Gen. ix. 2 ff.), though its conditions are modified. Prophets and Apostles look steadily forward to the restoration of man's destined relation to God and to creation (**Is. xi. 1—9**; Rom. viii. 18—22). God's purposes are not frustrated by man's sin, and the Psalm is virtually a prophecy. It finds 'fulfilment' in the Incarnation.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (ii. 6 ff.) quotes *vv.* 4–6, and contrasts man's failure with this his lofty destiny. "We see not yet all things subjected to him." "But," as he goes on to say, applying the Psalmist's words to the condescension of the Incarnation, "we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour." The Son of Man, the representative of the race, receives as the reward of His obedience unto death the honour designed for man, and in His exaltation we see "the pledge that the Divine counsel of love will not fail of fulfilment" (Bp. Westcott, *Christus Consummator*, p. 21).

St Paul too quotes the last half of *v.* 6 as an assurance of the final triumph of Christ (1 Cor. xv. 27; cp. Eph. i. 22). If all things were subjected to the first Adam who failed through sin, not less must they be subjected to the second Adam who triumphs through obedience, and fulfils the destiny of the race.

The title attributes the Psalm to David, and it may well be his. The fact that the author of the Book of Job was familiar with the Psalm (cp. Job vii. 17 ff. with *v.* 4) would be a strong confirmation of the accuracy of the title, if that book could be assigned with certainty to the time of Solomon; but the uncertainty as to its date prevents any argument being drawn from the allusion. It has been suggested that David composed the Psalm as a shepherd on the plains of Bethlehem. With all its marvellous depth of meaning, it certainly possesses a striking freshness and simplicity; but would it not be more natural to regard it as the later fruit of seeds of thought sown then and gradually brought to maturity?

The appropriateness of this Psalm as one of the Proper Psalms for Ascension Day is obvious. It is in the Ascension of Christ that we see man, in the person of his perfect representative, "crowned with glory and honour."

To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm of David.

O LORD our Lord,
How excellent *is* thy name in all the earth!
Who hast set thy glory above the heavens. 8

On the title. **For the Chief Musician**; **set to the Gittith** (R.V.), see Introd. p. xxv.

1, 2. The fundamental thought and motive of the Psalm: the revelation of JEHOVAH'S majesty on earth.

1. *O LORD, our Lord*] **Jehovah, our Lord.** Coverdale rightly felt the need of some audible distinction between LORD (= JEHOVAH) and *Lord* (= Adonai), when he rendered *O Lorde oure Governoure*. Cp. Jerome's *Domine dominator noster*. How fitting is this acknowledgment of Jehovah's sovereignty for the opening of a Psalm in which man's delegated dominion over the world is brought into such prominence. Here, for the first time in the Psalter, the Psalmist associates others with himself in addressing Jehovah ("*our* Lord"). He speaks on behalf of the covenant people, hardly as yet (at any rate consciously) on behalf of all mankind. Cp. Neh. x. 29; viii. 10; Ps. cxxxv. 5; cxlvii. 5; Is. xxvi. 13.

how excellent] Or, **majestic**. The word is related to that rendered *honour* in *v.* 5, and *majesty* in civ. 1. It suggests the ideas of amplitude, splendour, magnificence. Cp. lxxvi. 4; xciii. 4 (A.V. *mighty*).

thy name] That expression of Thyself in the works of Creation and Providence by which Thy character may be recognised. Cp. v. 11.

Who hast set] "The Hebrew," as the margin of the R.V. candidly notes, "is obscure." The word, as vocalised in the Massoretic Text, is imperative, 'set thou': but the construction would be unparalleled, and a prayer for the manifestation of God's glory in the heavens would be out of place, for it is already manifested there. No satisfactory explanation can be offered without some alteration of the text. Changing the vowels we may render, 'Thou whose glory is spread over the heavens,' (cp. Hab. iii. 3): or, 'Thou whose glory is celebrated above the heavens.' Cp. the LXX, 'Thy magnificence is exalted above the heavens' (ἐπήρθη ἡ μεγαλοπρεπία σου ὑπεράνω τῶν οὐρανῶν). But it seems best to make the slight change of consonants required for the rendering of the A.V., which gives an excellent sense, and is supported by the Targum, Syriac, Symmachus, and Jerome, among the ancient versions. Jehovah has set His glory **upon the heavens** (so R.V. rightly, though retaining *above* in the marg.), clothed them with a glory which is the reflection and manifestation of His own (civ. 1). Cp. the uses of the phrase in Num. xxvii. 20; 1 Chr. xxix. 25; Dan. xi. 21; **and a similar phrase in Ps. xxi. 5.**

The connexion of the clause has still to be considered. It may be joined with the preceding invocation, and a full stop placed at the end of the verse as in A.V.: or it may be taken in close connexion with *v.* 2:

Thou who hast set thy glory upon the heavens,
Out of the mouth of children and sucklings hast thou founded strength.

2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength
Because of thine enemies,
That *thou* mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

This construction seems preferable; for it leaves the opening invocation to stand by itself as it does at the close of the Psalm (*v.* 9): it emphasises the contrast between Jehovah's revelation of Himself in the splendour of the heavens, and His revelation of Himself in the weakest specimens of humanity, which, paradox as it may seem, is not less but more significant and convincing: and thus it brings out the parallelism between the last clause of *v.* 1 and *v.* 3, and between *v.* 2 and *v.* 4 ff. But however we punctuate, *v.* 2 must not be disconnected from *v.* 1.

2. Render:

Out of the mouth of children and sucklings hast thou founded strength,
Because of thine adversaries,
To quell the enemy and the avenger.

Instead of *founded strength*, we might render, *fortress, stronghold*, established a defence: but the more general sense is preferable. The LXX gives a free version, 'Thou hast perfected praise,' and in this form the words are quoted in Matt. xxi. 16.

The general sense is plain. Jehovah has ordained that even the feeblest representatives of humanity should be His champions to confound and silence those who oppose His kingdom and deny His goodness and providential government. The mystery of man, of a being made in the image of God to know God, is greater than the mystery of the heavens, with all their immensity and majesty, as truly as the spiritual and eternal is greater than the material and temporal. Man therefore, even in the weakness of childhood, is a witness of the existence and character of God. But *how* is the testimony uttered? The words must not be prosaically defined and limited. The inarticulate, unspoken testimony to its Creator borne by the mere existence of the infant with its wonderful instincts and capacities for development; the powers of reason and thought and speech; the exercise of these powers in the praise of God with the simple faith of childhood; all are included. Nor is it mere poetic fancy to say that

> "Trailing clouds of glory do we come,
> From God, who is our home,"

and that

> "Heaven lies about us in our infancy."

This truth was illustrated in the Hosannas of the children who welcomed the Lord on His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, while the chief priests and scribes hardened their hearts in contemptuous hostility, (Matt. xxi. 15 ff.); but it has a wider scope than that particular instance.

The interpretation of 'children and sucklings' as 'weak and humble

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, 3
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
What *is* man, that thou art mindful of him? 4
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?

believers' (Matt. xi. 25), does not take account of the context. It may be a justifiable application of the words, but there is no hint that they are used figuratively, and it is of man as man that the Psalmist speaks here not less than in *vv.* 4 ff. Nor again must the words be understood in a general sense as the equivalent of 1 Cor. i. 26 ff., though a part of the truth they contain illustrates the principle of divine economy there asserted.

'Thine adversaries'...'the enemy and avenger' must not be limited to the enemies of the nation by a reference to xliv. 5, 16. These no doubt are among the enemies of Jehovah; but all within the nation who oppose God's purposes or question His Providence, the 'wicked,' the 'scorners,' (i. 1) the 'fools' (xiv. 1) are equally included. The 'avenger' in particular is one who usurps, in his own selfish interests, a judicial function which belongs to God alone (Deut. xxxii. 35; Nah. i. 2).

3. 4. The contemplation of the heavens in all their splendour forces the Psalmist to wonder that God should choose so insignificant a thing as man for the object of His special regard.

3. *thy heavens*] The heavens as created by God and manifesting His glory. Cp. lxxxix. 11; Job xxxvi. 29; xxxviii. 33; Is. xl. 26.

It is of the sky at night that the Psalmist is thinking, for he does not mention the sun; and unquestionably the star-lit sky, especially in the transparent clearness of an Eastern atmosphere, is more suggestive of the vastness and variety and mystery of the universe. See the eloquent passage from Whewell's *Astronomy*, Book III. ch. 3, quoted by Bp. Perowne.

the work of thy fingers] The deft workmanship of a skilful artificer supplies a figure for the creative operations of God. Cp. xix. 1; cii. 25.

4. Then (so the ellipse may be filled up), the thought is forced upon me

What is frail man that thou shouldest be mindful of him?
And the son of man, that thou shouldest visit him?

The words for *man* are chosen to emphasise his weakness in contrast to the vast and (apparently) unchanging structure of the heavens. *Enosh* denotes man in his frailty, impotence, mortality (ciii. 15); hence it is used with special frequency in Job, where man is contrasted with God (e.g. Job iv. 17, where A.V. renders *mortal man*). *Ben-adām* (son of man) denotes man according to his earthly origin. Cp. Job's 'man that is born of a woman' (xiv. 1).

God's 'visitation' of man is His constant, loving, providential, regard (Job x. 12). It is to God's present and continuous care that the verse refers. It is not until *v.* 5 that the Psalmist looks back to man's original creation.

There is an echo of these words in cxliv. 3, and Jer. xv. 15; and Job

5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,
And hast crowned him *with* glory and honour.
6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands;
Thou hast put all *things* under his feet:
7 All sheep and oxen,
Yea, and the beasts of the field;
8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,
And whatsoever passeth *through* the paths of the seas.

parodies them, when he asks in the bitterness of his soul how man can be of such importance to God that He should think it worth while to persecute him (vii. 17 ff.).

On the quotation of *vv.* 4—6 in Hebr. ii. 6 ff., see above.

5, 6. The Psalmist looks back to man's creation. God's regard was exhibited in the nature with which man was endowed, and the position of sovereignty in which he was placed.

5. Render as R.V.:

For thou hast made him but little lower than God,
And crownest him with glory and honour.

In rendering *than the angels* the A.V. follows the LXX, Vulg., Targ. and Syriac. The later Greek versions (Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion) and Jerome, rightly render *than God*. For though in some cases *Elohim* (God or gods) is applied to supernatural beings generally (1 Sam. xxviii. 13), angels are rather called 'sons of God;' and moreover there is a clear reference to the creation of man in the image of God, after His likeness (Gen. i. 26, 27).

'Glory' and 'honour' (or, majesty: *worship* in P.B.V. is an archaism for *honour*) are the attributes of royalty: of God Himself (cxlv. 5, 12), and of kings who are His representatives (xxi. 5; xlv. 3). Man is crowned king of creation.

6. Again a reference to Gen. i. 26, 28. 'Thou hast put all things under his feet' reads like a paraphrase of the word there rendered 'let them have dominion,' which means primarily 'to tread under foot,' and thence 'to rule.' On St Paul's application of the words in 1 Cor. xv. 27 see above.

7, 8. Man's subjects are as it were mustered and passed in review: domestic animals, and even the wild creatures that roam at large over the open country; the birds of the air (lit. *heaven*, as civ. 12), and the fish of the sea, and all the manifold inhabitants of the mysterious depths of ocean. See Gen. i. 21; ix. 2. Cp. Homer's ὑγρὰ κέλευθα (*Il.* i. 312); "the wet sea-paths," as Milton calls them in his version of the Psalm.

The living creatures here enumerated are only mentioned by way of example and illustration of "all things." In the Psalmist's day the

O LORD our Lord, how excellent *is* thy name in all the 9
earth!

dominion of man over nature was most strikingly exercised in his mastery over the animal creation, which he tamed or caught and turned to his own use. "Man has become," says Darwin, "even in his rudest state, the most dominant animal that has ever appeared on this earth." In our own day it is by the investigation of the great laws of nature, and by the utilisation of the great forces of nature, that man asserts and extends his sovereignty.

9. How can the Psalmist better close than with the same exclamation of reverent wonder with which he began; repeated now with fuller significance, after meditation on the way in which the truth it asserts is most signally declared!

PSALM IX.

There is evidently a close relationship between the Ninth and Tenth Psalms. In the LXX, Vulg., and Jerome's Latin Version they are reckoned as a single Psalm: and the absence of a title to Ps. x, contrary to the general rule in Book I (Introd. p. liii), may indicate that in the Hebrew text it was originally united to Psalm ix.[1]

They are connected by resemblances (*a*) of *form*, and (*b*) of *language*. (*a*) The same 'alphabetic' or 'acrostic' structure appears in both. In Ps. ix the pairs of verses begin with successive letters of the alphabet, with the exceptions that the fourth letter (*Daleth*) is missing; the fifth letter (*He*) is obscured by a corruption of the text in *v.* 7; and the eleventh letter (*Kaph*) is represented by *Qōph*[2] in *v.* 19. Ps. x begins with the twelfth letter (*Lamed*): but the alphabetical arrangement is then dropped, and six letters are passed over. At *v.* 12 however the structure of Ps. ix reappears, and *vv.* 12, 14, 15, 17 begin with the last four letters of the alphabet in order. (*b*) *Language.* 'In times of trouble' (ix. 9, x. 1) is a peculiar phrase found nowhere else: the word for 'oppressed' or 'downtrodden' (ix. 9: x. 18) occurs elsewhere only in Ps. lxxiv. 21; Prov. xxvi. 28 (?): 'mortal man' is mentioned at the close of both Psalms in the same connexion (ix. 19, 20; x. 18). Comp. further ix. 12 *a* with x. 4, 13: ix. 12 *b* with x. 12, and ix. 18 with x. 11: 'for ever and ever,' ix. 5, x. 16: the appeal to 'arise' ix. 19, x. 12: and other points of thought and expression.

But while the resemblance in form and language is so marked, the difference in tone and subject is not less striking. The individuality of the writer, which is so prominent in Ps. ix (*vv.* 1–4; 13, 14), disappears in Ps. x. Ps. ix is a triumphant thanksgiving, rarely passing into prayer (*vv.* 13, 19): its theme is the manifestation of God's sovereign righteousness in the defeat and destruction of *foreign enemies* of the nation. Ps. x is a plaintive expostulation and prayer, describing

[1] Comp. the analogous case of Pss. xlii, xliii.

[2] I.e. the hard guttural Semitic *k*, the 19th letter of the alphabet, takes the place of the soft *k*.

the tyrannous conduct of *godless men within the nation*, and pleading that God will no longer delay to vindicate His righteousness, and prove Himself the Defender of the helpless.

The two Psalms present an unsolved literary problem. The description of the wicked man (x. 3—11) may have been taken from another poem, for it is distinguished by other peculiarities, besides the absence of the alphabetic structure. We cannot tell whether verses beginning with the missing letters of the alphabet were displaced to make room for it, or whether it stood here from the first. The latter alternative seems most probable, for the concluding verses of the Psalm have links of connexion with *vv.* 3—11. Comp. 'helpless" in *v.* 14 with *vv.* 8, 10; *v.* 13 with *v.* 4; *v.* 14 with *v.* 11.

Ps. ix however appears to be complete in itself, and it seems preferable to regard Ps. x as a companion piece rather than as part of a continuous whole.

The connexion of thought is clear. The Psalmist has watched the great conflict between good and evil being waged in two fields: in the world, between Israel and the heathen nations; in the nation of Israel, between godless oppressors of the weak and their innocent victims. He has seen the sovereignty of God decisively vindicated in the world by the defeat of Israel's enemies: but when he surveys the conflict within the nation, wrong seems to be triumphant. So he prays for an equally significant demonstration of God's sovereignty within the nation by a signal punishment of the wicked who deny His power or will to interpose.

These Psalms have been assigned to widely differing dates. But the tradition of their Davidic origin may be right. The author of Ps. ix speaks as the representative of the nation, in language more natural to a king than to anyone else. The enemies of the nation are his enemies (*v.* 3); the national cause is his cause (*v.* 4).

This Psalm then may celebrate David's victories in general (2 Sam. viii); and x. 16 may refer in particular to the expulsion of the Philistines who occupied the north of Palestine for some time after the disaster of Gilboa (1 Sam. xxxi. 7), and to the subjugation of the Jebusites.

Nor is it difficult to understand how David might have to deplore the existence of domestic evils such as those described in Ps. x, without being able to remedy them[2]. The misgovernment of Saul's later years, and the contest between Ish-bosheth and David must have left a serious legacy of civil disorder (1 Sam. xxii. 1, 2; 2 Sam. iii. 1, 22, iv. 2); and we have indications that David was not in a position to control his powerful nobles and enforce the administration of justice (2 Sam. iii. 39; xv. 2 ff.).

The Davidic origin of Ps. ix is supported by its connexion with Ps. vii. The closing words of Ps. vii (cp. xviii. 49) are taken up and expanded in Ps. ix. 1, 2: both Psalms are inspired by a vivid sense of the judicial righteousness of Jehovah (vii. 6 ff., 11; ix. 4, 7, 8, 16, 19): in both we have the thought of evil recoiling upon its authors (vii. 14 ff.;

[1] The only reference to 'the nations' (in *v.* 18) is by way of illustration.

[2] Compare the account of Charlemain's reign in Dean Church's *Beginning of the Middle Ages*, p. 125.

ix. 15 ff.) The connexion of v. 11, vii. 17, viii. 1, 9, ix. 1, 10; should also be noted.

It may further be remarked that in Ps. x triumphant injustice is regarded in the simplest light as a wrong that calls for redress; not as in Ps. xxxvii, as a ground of discontent, or as in Ps. lxxiii, as a trial of faith.

The train of thought is as follows.

Ps. ix. The Psalmist resolves to celebrate Jehovah's praise for victory won by His help (1—4). He contrasts the transitoriness of the nations in their wickedness with the eternal sovereignty of the righteous Judge (5—8). Who never fails to defend the godly (9, 10). A renewed invitation to praise (11, 12) is succeeded by a prayer for help in the hour of need (13, 14); and the revelation of Jehovah's judicial righteousness in the discomfiture of the heathen is once more proclaimed (15, 16). After an interlude of music the Psalm concludes with a confident anticipation of the certainty of judgement and deliverance (17, 18), and a prayer that the nations may be taught to know their human impotence (19, 20).

Ps. x. From the conflict between Israel and the nations in which God's sovereignty has been victoriously manifested, the Psalmist turns to the triumph of might over right in Israel itself. He remonstrates with Jehovah for His apparent indifference (1, 2), and draws a graphic picture of the atheistic self-complacency and pitiless tyranny of 'the wicked man' (3—11). An urgent appeal to Jehovah to intervene and right these crying wrongs is followed by a confident expression of assurance that they are not unobserved or disregarded (12—14). The prayer for the extirpation of evil finds a pledge for its fulfilment in the eternal sovereignty of Jehovah and the extermination of the heathen from His land (15, 16). The prayer of faith cannot remain unanswered, and heaven-protected right will finally be triumphant over earthly might (17, 18).

The title should be rendered as in R.V., For the Chief Musician; set to Muth-labben. Probably (if the Massoretic text is sound) *Muth-labben* are the opening words of some well-known melody to which the Psalm was to be sung. Comp. the title of xxii: 'set to Ayyeleth hash-Shahar,' i.e. 'the hind of the morning'; and of lvi and lvii. The words are obscure, but may mean 'Die for the son,' or, 'Death to the son.'

The analogy of other titles is decisive against all the interpretations which explain these words to refer to the contents or occasion of the Psalm; 'upon the death of Ben,' or. 'Labben,' or 'the son;' by whom some unknown but formidable enemy of the nation, or Goliath, or even (as though David could possibly have written in this tone then) Absalom, is supposed to be intended. The tradition that it refers to Goliath is as old as the Targum, which paraphrases, "Concerning the death of the man who went forth between the camps," an allusion to 1 Sam. xvii. 4, where the Heb. word for 'champion' is 'man of the space between the camps.'

It is however possible that the present text is a corruption of the words 'upon Alamoth' which occur in the title of xlvi (cp. 1 Chr. xv. 20). So the LXX, Aquila, and Theodotion appear to have read, though they give wrong renderings. See Introd. p. xxv.

To the chief Musician upon Muth-labben, A Psalm of David.

9 (א) I will praise *thee*, O LORD, with my whole heart;
I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.
2 I will be glad and rejoice in thee:
I will sing *praise* to thy name, O thou most High.
3 (ב) When mine enemies are turned back,
They shall fall and perish at thy presence.
4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause;
Thou satest in the throne judging right.

1—4. The Psalmist's purpose to praise Jehovah for the recent manifestation of His righteous judgement in the defeat of His enemies. Each of the four lines in *vv.* 1, 2 begins with *Aleph*, the first letter of the alphabet.

1. *I will praise* thee, *O LORD*] R.V., I will give thanks unto the **LORD**, as in vii. 17.

with my whole heart] With the *heart*, not with the lips only (Is. xxix. 13): with the *whole* heart, acknowledging that all the honour is due to Jehovah. Cp. Deut. vi. 5. These conditions of true worship correspond to the divine attributes of omniscience (vii. 9) and 'jealousy' (Ex. xxxiv. 14).

thy marvellous works] A special term for the singular and conspicuous works of God, both in nature (Job v. 9), and in His dealings with His people (Ex. iii. 20), particularly in the great crises of their history (lxxviii. 4, 11, 32), which declare His power and love, and arouse the admiration of all who behold them. The word includes 'miracles' commonly so called, as one limited class of 'the wonderful works of God,' but is of much wider application. To recount and celebrate His marvellous works is the duty and delight of God's saints.

2. *rejoice*] R.V., **exult**; the same word as in v. 11 *c*. The closing words of Ps. vii are taken up and expanded in these two verses.

3, 4. Stanza of *Beth*. It is best to place a semicolon only at the end of *v.* 2, and render *v.* 3 in close connexion with it:

Because mine enemies turn back,
Stumble and perish at Thy presence.

The 'presence' or 'face' of God is to His enemies necessarily a manifestation of victorious wrath. Comp. xxi. 9 (R.V. marg.); xxxiv. 16; Ex. xiv. 24. The verse is a vivid picture of a panic rout: the foe turning to flee, stumbling in their precipitate haste, overtaken and annihilated. Cp. xxxv. 5, 6.

4. In the defeat of his enemies he sees God's judicial intervention on his behalf. God has pronounced and executed sentence in his favour. Cp. vii. 8, 9.

thou satest &c.] Better, **thou didst take thy seat on the throne, judging righteously.** *The throne* is that of judgement (*v.* 7; Prov. xx. 8). God has assumed this judicial character, in answer to the Psalmist's prayer in vii. 7.

(ג) Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, 5
Thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.
(ד) O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: 6
And thou hast destroyed cities;
Their memorial is perished *with* them.

5, 6. Stanza of *Gimel*. The utter destruction of the nations in their wickedness.

5. *Thou hast rebuked the heathen*] Or, as R.V. text, the nations, though here, where the word is parallel to *the wicked*, and denotes the nations in obstinate and sinful opposition to God's people, *heathen* (R.V. marg.) might stand. God's 'rebuke' is the effectual sentence of His wrath which carries its own execution with it (lxxvi. 6).

Thou hast put out their name] R.V., Thou hast blotted out their name. Cp. Deut. ix. 14.

6. The enemy are consumed, left desolate for ever;
And (their) cities thou didst uproot; the very remembrance of them is perished.

An address to the enemy (P.B.V. and A.V.) would be out of place here; and the word rendered *destructions* does not bear an active sense, but means *ruins* or *desolations*. It is best to regard the words as still addressed to Jehovah, continuing the description of His judgment on the enemies of Israel. The language of this and the preceding verse recalls that of the curse on Amalek: "I will utterly *blot out the remembrance* of Amalek from under heaven" (Ex. xvii. 14; cp. Deut. xxv. 19). 'Their memorial' or 'remembrance' refers grammatically to the enemy, not to the cities, and the pronoun is repeated in the original to emphasise the contrast between those who are thus destroyed and forgotten, and Jehovah who sits enthroned on high for ever.

Critical reasons however suggest a slight alteration of the text. If the emphatic pronoun is transferred from the end of *v.* 6 to the beginning of *v.* 7, and a verb supplied, we may render,

They are perished, but the LORD sitteth &c.

This emendation (approved by Delitzsch) marks the contrast still more strongly (cp. cii. 26), and moreover makes the pair of verses 7 and 8 begin, as they should, with the letter *Hē*. There is also much to be said in favour of transposing the clauses of *v.* 6 thus, as proposed by Nowack:

The enemy are consumed, the remembrance of them is perished:
And the cities thou didst uproot are desolate for ever.

7—10. A stanza of four verses, each (as the text stands) beginning with the letter *Vāv*. But *v.* 7 may originally have begun with *Hē*. [In Dr Scrivener's text *Hē* is prefixed to *v.* 6; but this verse should belong to the stanza of *Gimel*]. The eternity of Jehovah's sovereignty is contrasted with the annihilation of His enemies: the righteousness of His rule with the injustice of the wicked.

7 (ו) But the LORD shall endure for ever:
He hath prepared his throne for judgment.
8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness,
He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.
9 The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed,
A refuge in times of trouble.
10 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee:
For thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

7. **But the LORD**, in contrast to the enemies of His people, **shall sit enthroned for ever**, as King and Judge. For this pregnant sense of *sit*, cp. xxix. 10; Exod. xviii. 14.

8. *And he shall judge*] *He* is emphatic. His administration, in contrast to that of so many human rulers, will be one of perfect justice and equity. And it will be universal. The vindication of his right which the Psalmist has just experienced is the earnest of a judgement which will embrace the whole world and all peoples. For *people* read **peoples**, and for *uprightness*, equity, as in v. 4. Cp. vii. 8; xcvi. **10, 13**; Acts xvii. 31.

The Heb. word *tēbēl* rendered *world* denotes the fruitful, habitable part of the earth (cp. οἰκουμένη), here of course including its inhabitants. Cp. Prov. viii. 31.

9, 10. **So may Jehovah be a high tower for the down trodden,**
A high tower in times of extremity;
And let them that know Thy name trust in Thee,
Because Thou hast not forsaken them that seek Thee, O Jehovah.

These verses express the result of Jehovah's judgement in the deliverance of those who are crushed and down-trodden (x. 18; Job v. 4) by the world's magnates, and the consequent encouragement of the faithful.

a refuge] **A high tower** or **fort**: in the Psalter always metaphorically of God. Cp. xviii. 2, &c., and the use of the cognate verb in xx. 1 and elsewhere. The figure may well be derived from the experience of David in his outlaw life. The down trodden victim is lifted up far **out of the reach of his tormentors.** Cp. Prov. xviii. 10.

trouble] A word occurring elsewhere only in x. 1. It seems to mean the *extremity* of trouble in which all hope of deliverance is cut off. The idea may be that the precipice which apparently barred the fugitive's escape proves to be his retreat from his pursuers.

10. *they that know thy name*] Who recognise the character of God thus revealed in His Providence. Cp. "they that love thy name," v. 11; and viii. 1; xci. 14.

thou, LORD, hast not forsaken] Cp. the noble words of Ecclesiasticus ii. 10; "Look at the generations of old and see; did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded? or did any abide in his fear, and was forsaken? or whom did he ever despise, that called upon him?"—the "sentence" which "fell with weight" upon John Bunyan's spirit in the agony of his spiritual despair. "It was with such strength and comfort

(7) Sing *praises* to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: 11
Declare among the people his doings.
When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth 12
them:
He forgetteth not the cry of the humble.

on my spirit, that I was as if it talked with me." *Grace Abounding*, § 62 ff.

them that seek thee] See note on xxiv. 6.

11, 12. Stanza of *Zayin*. A call to praise.

11. *which dwelleth in Zion*] Or, (cp. *v.* 7) *sitteth enthroned*. Zion became the special abode of Jehovah from the time when the Ark, the symbol of His Presence, was placed there (lxxvi. 2; cxxxii. 13 f.). The cherubim which overshadowed the ark were the throne of His glory (lxxx. 1; xcix. 1). It was the earthly counterpart of heaven (ii. 4): from thence He manifested Himself for the help of His people (iii. 4; xx. 2).

the people] Rather, the peoples, as R.V. marg. Not Israel, but the nations around, are meant. Jehovah's *doings* (lxxvii. 12; lxxviii. 11; ciii. 7), i.e. His mighty works on behalf of His people, are to be proclaimed among them. The first step towards their conversion is that they should know the evidences of His power and love. Cp. xviii. 49; lvii. 9; xcvi. 3; cv. 1; Is. xii. 4.

12. For he that maketh requisition for bloodshed hath remembered them:
He hath not forgotten the cry of the humble.

The call to praise is based on a definite experience (*hath remembered, hath not forgotten*), rather than on a general truth (*remembereth, forgetteth not*). Jehovah is the Goel, the Avenger of blood, who investigates all offences against His sacred gift of human life, and demands satisfaction for them (Gen. ix. 5 f.). Such offences 'cry' to God for vengeance (Gen. iv. 10). 'Bloodshed' may include crimes of violence which fall short of actual murder, but rob men of the rightful use and enjoyment of their lives. Cf. Job xxiv. 2 ff.

them] The oppressed seekers of Jehovah mentioned in *vv.* 9, 10; the 'poor' of the next line.

the cry] For illustration comp. Ex. iii. 7, 9; 1 Sam. ix. 16; Job xxxiv. 28.

the humble] R.V. the poor, marg. meek. The traditional reading (*Qrī*) is *'anāvīm*, though the text (*Kthībh*) has *'aniyyīm*. Both words are derived from the same root, meaning *to bend* or *bow down*. The first is intransitive in form, and denotes the character of one who bows himself down: *lowly, humble, meek* (LXX πραΰς). The second is passive in form, and denotes primarily the condition of one who is bowed down by external circumstances of poverty, trouble, or oppression: *poor, afflicted* (comp. the cognate substantive in *v.* 13, *my trouble*, R.V. *affliction*). But inasmuch as humility is learnt in the school of affliction and poverty (cp. Matt. v. 3 with Luke vi. 20), it often has

13 (ח) Have mercy upon me, O LORD;
Consider my trouble *which I suffer* of them that hate me,
Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death:
14 That I may shew forth all thy praise
In the gates of the daughter of Zion:

the secondary sense of *meek, humble* (LXX generally πτωχός, πένης, sometimes ταπεινός or πραΰς), and the distinction between the two words is lost. The second of the two words (but not the first) is often coupled or in parallelism with *ebhyōn* 'needy,' *v.* 18), or *dal* 'weak,' 'feeble' (lxxxii. 3, 4); and these words also, though primarily denoting condition, tend to acquire a moral significance.

The 'afflicted,' 'poor,' 'meek,' 'humble,' are a class that meet us frequently in the Psalms and Prophets. They are those whose condition specially calls for the special protection of Jehovah, and of righteous rulers who are His true representatives (Ps. lxxii. 2, 4, 12); and whose character for the most part fits them to be objects of the divine favour. They are contrasted with the proud, the scorners, the oppressors, whose contemptuous independence and high-handed violence will meet with due punishment (Prov. iii. 34).

13, 14. Stanza of *Cheth*. The connexion is difficult. The preceding and succeeding verses speak of deliverance granted, of victory won. Why then this abruptly introduced prayer for relief? To regard it as the 'cry of the afflicted' in their past distress seems inconsistent with the vigorous directness of the Psalm; and it is best to suppose that the recollection of dangers which still threaten prompts a prayer even in the moment of triumph. But it is possible that by a simple change in the vocalisation (Introd. p. lxvii) the verbs should be read as perfects instead of imperatives:—'Jehovah *hath been gracious* unto me; he *hath seen* my affliction...lifting me up &c.' So the Greek version of Aquila; and so Jerome, according to the best reading (*misertus est mei...vidit afflictionem meam*).

13. *Have mercy upon me*] Rather, Be gracious unto me. See note on iv. 1.

consider my trouble &c.] See the affliction which I suffer from them that hate me. Cp. x. 14; xxxi. 7; Exod. iii. 7, 9; iv. 31.

thou that liftest me up from the gates of death] He had been brought down as it were to the very entrance of that mysterious place from which he knew of no possibility of return; to the gates which opened for entrance but not for exit. Cp. cvii. 18; Job xxxviii. 17; Is. xxxviii. 10; Matt. xvi. 18; and the Homeric Ἀΐδαο πύλαι (*Il.* v. 646, &c.). How different the Christian view of "the grave and gate of death" as the passage to "a joyful resurrection!"

14. *in the gates*] i.e. with the utmost publicity (cxvi. 14); for the city gates were the common place of concourse and business, corresponding to the agora or forum of Greece and Rome. Cp. Job xxix. 7; Prov. viii. 3; Jer. xvii. 19, 20. The implied contrast between "the

I will rejoice in thy salvation.
(ט) The heathen are sunk down in the pit *that* they made: 15
In the net which they hid is their own foot taken.
The LORD is known *by* the judgment *which* he executeth: 16
The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.
Higgaion. Selah.
(י) The wicked shall be turned into hell, 17

cheerful ways of men" and the gloomy entrance to the nether world is obvious. The colon should be placed after *praise* not after *Zion*.

Forts (P.B.V.) is an obsolete word for *gates*, from Lat. *porta*.

the daughter of Zion] A poetical personification of the citizens or the city as an individual. Originally Zion was thought of as the mother, the citizens collectively as her daughter; but as terms for land and people are easily interchanged, the expression came to be applied to the city itself (Is. i. 8; Lam. ii. 15). 'Daughter of Zion' occurs nowhere else in the Psalter (see however 'daughter of Tyre,' xlv. 12; 'daughter of Babylon,' cxxxvii. 8), but together with the cognate phrases 'daughter of Jerusalem,' 'daughter of my people' &c. frequently in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Zechariah, and is specially characteristic of the Lamentations.

salvation] R.V. marg., *saving help*. See note on iii. 8.

15, 16. Stanza of *Teth*, resuming the description of the judgment. Wickedness has been made to minister to its own discomfiture. Cp. vii. 15 f.

15. *The heathen*] **The nations**, as in *v.* 5. The figures are taken from the pitfalls and nets used in hunting. Cp. vii. 15, xxxv. 7, 8, lvii. 6.

16. **Jehovah hath made himself known, he hath executed judgment,**
Snaring the wicked in the work of his own hands.

For God's revelation of Himself in judgment comp. xlviii. 3 (R.V.): Ex. vii. 5; xiv. 4, 18; Ezek. xxxviii. 23.

Higgaion] A musical term, rendered *a solemn sound* in xcii. 3, and here in conjunction with *Selah* directing the introduction of a jubilant interlude, to celebrate the triumph of the divine righteousness.

17, 18. Stanza of *Yod*. Confident anticipation for the future, arising naturally out of the contemplation of Jehovah's recent judgement.

17. R.V. rightly:

The wicked shall return to Sheol,
Even all the nations that forget God.

Sheol is not hell as the place of torment. What is meant is that the career of the wicked in this world will be cut short by the judgement of God. Cp. lv. 15, lxiii. 9. But why 'return?' Man must 'return' unto the ground from which he was taken, to the dust of which he was made, to his elementary atoms (Gen. iii. 19; Ps. civ. 29, xc. 3). A still closer parallel is to be found in the words of Job (xxx. 23) 'unto

And all the nations that forget God.

18 (כ) For the needy shall not alway be forgotten:
The expectation of the poor shall *not* perish for ever.

19 Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail:
Let the heathen be judged in thy sight.

20 Put them in fear, O LORD:
That the nations may know themselves *to be but* men.
Selah.

death wilt thou make me return.' Cp. too Job i. 21. The shadowy existence in Sheol to which man passes at death is comparable to the state of non existence out of which he was called at birth. "From the great deep to the great deep he goes." There Job will have no more enjoyment of life, there 'the wicked' will have no more power for evil.

that forget God] Cp. Ps. l. 22; Job viii. 13, for the phrase, and Ps. x. 4 for the thought. Observe that it is *God*, not *Jehovah*; the nations could not know Him in His character of the God of revelation, but even to them "he left not himself without witness" (Acts xiv. 17), but manifested to them what they could know concerning Himself (Rom. i. 18—23). Deliberate wickedness, especially as shewn in antagonism to God's chosen people, implied a culpable forgetfulness of God.

18. **For the needy shall not perpetually be forgotten:**
Nor the hope of the afflicted be disappointed for ever.

Man forgets God; but God does not forget man.

expectation] The patient hope which waits upon God in faith (LXX ὑπομονή: Vulg. patientia). Comp. the frequent use of the cognate verb generally rendered *wait*: xxv. 3, 5, 21, xxvii. 14, xxxvii. 9, 34, xl. 1, cxxx. 5; Is. xxv. 9, xxvi. 8: and elsewhere.

the poor] Here the traditional reading is *'aniyyīm*, 'afflicted,' though the text has *'anāvīm*, 'meek.' See note on *v.* 12.

19. 20. This stanza should begin with *Kaph*, but (if the text is sound) the similar letter *Qoph* is substituted for it. [*Kaph* is prefixed to *v.* 18 in Dr Scrivener's text; but this verse belongs to the stanza of *Yod*.] It is a prayer for further and still more complete judgment upon the nations, that they may be taught to know their human weakness.

Arise, O Jehovah; let not mortal man wax strong:
Let the nations be judged in thy presence.
Ordain terror for them, O Jehovah,
Let the nations know they are but mortal.

The word for 'man' (*enōsh*) denotes man in his weakness as contrasted with God (2 Chr. xiv. 11; Job iv. 17; Is. li. 7, 12). 'Strength' is the prerogative of God (lxii. 11); though men and nations are apt to think that it is inherent in themselves (lii. 7); and therefore the Psalmist prays that the proud antagonism of the nations may receive a salutary lesson. They are to be summoned to Jehovah's presence and there judged.

20. *Put them in fear*] Lit. *set terror for them:* some awe-inspiring exhibition of power, such as were the wonders of the Exodus. (Deut.

(ל) Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? 10
Why hidest thou *thyself* in times of trouble?
The wicked in *his* pride doth persecute the poor: 2
Let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.
For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, 3
And blesseth the covetous, *whom* the LORD abhorreth.

iv. 34, xxvi. 8, xxxiv. 12; Jer. xxxii. 21.) The rendering of LXX, Vulg., Syr., *appoint a lawgiver over them*, (reading *mōreh* for *mōrah*) is certainly wrong, though it is adopted by Luther and by some modern critics.

PSALM X.

1, 2. Stanza of *Lamed*. Expostulation with Jehovah for neglect of His persecuted people, and statement of the wrongs which call for redress.

1. *Why standest thou afar off*] As an indifferent or indolent spectator. Cp. xxxviii. 11 (of fair-weather friends); xxii. 1 (of God); Is. lix. 14; and the corresponding prayer in xxii. 11, 19, xxxv. 22, xxxviii. 21, lxxi. 12. Conversely, God is said to be 'near' when His power is manifested (lxxv. 1, xxxiv. 18).

why hidest thou thyself] Lit. *why mufflest thou?*—Thine eyes so that Thou dost not see (Is. i. 15); Thine ears so that Thou dost not hear (Lam. iii. 56). Cp. Ps. lv. 1.

in times of trouble] Or, of extremity. See note on ix. 9.

2. The general sense of the first clause is that given by R.V.:

In the pride of the wicked the poor is hotly pursued;

or possibly, *is consumed*, by fear, anxiety, and distress.

In the second clause there is a double ambiguity. The verb *taken* may be rendered as a wish or as a statement of fact; and its subject may be the 'wicked' or the 'poor.' Hence either, as A.V.,

let them (the wicked) *be taken in the devices that they have imagined:*

or, as LXX, Vulg., R.V. marg.:

they (the poor) *are taken in the devices that they* (the wicked) *have imagined.*

With the first rendering comp. vii. 15, 16, ix. 16: but the second is on the whole preferable. It gives a good parallelism to the first line of the verse; and a further description of the wrongs of the poor suits the context better than a parenthetical cry for retribution.

3—11. The Psalmist justifies his complaint by a description of the reckless character (3—6) and the ruthless conduct (7—11) of the wicked man, and he traces them to their source in his virtual atheism. The alphabetic structure disappears in this section.

3. A difficult verse. *Boasteth of his heart's desire* may mean either, makes shameless boast of his selfish greed without any pretence at concealment: or, boasts that he obtains all that he desires, and that, as the

4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek *after God:*
God *is* not *in* all his thoughts.
5 His ways are always grievous;
Thy judgments *are* far above out of his sight:
As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.

next clause shews, without troubling himself about God. This clause may be rendered;

and in his rapacity renounceth, yea contemneth Jehovah.

The verb rendered *bless* in A.V. means also *to bid farewell to, to renounce* (Job i. 5, ii. 9, &c.; R.V.). *Covetous* is an inadequate rendering for a word which means *to appropriate by violence or injustice*. The wicked man's lawless plundering of the poor is a virtual renunciation of Jehovah; nay more, it indicates positive contempt for Him (*v.* 13; Is. i. 4, v. 24).

Another rendering however deserves consideration:

For the wicked singeth praise over his own soul's lust:
And in his rapacity blesseth, (but) contemneth Jehovah.

He gives thanks for his prosperity, and like the shepherds of Zech. xi. 5, blesses God, though his conduct is really the grossest contempt for Him.

Grammatically possible, but far less forcible, is the rendering of R.V. marg., *blesseth the covetous*, but *contemneth* &c.: and *v.* 13, which combines 3 *b* and 4 *a*, is decisive against the rendering of A.V., *whom the* LORD *abhorreth*.

4. The A.V. follows the Ancient Versions in rendering, '*the wicked...will not seek* after God:' but a comparison of *v.* 13, which clearly recapitulates *vv.* 3, 4, is decisive in favour of rendering as follows:

As for the wicked, according to the loftiness of his looks, he saith,
He will not make requisition:
There is no God, is the sum of his devices.

The construction is abrupt and forcible. The wicked man's scornful countenance is the index of his character (ci. 5); all his **devices** (as *v.* 2) are planned on the assumption that God does not regard and punish (ix. 12); upon a virtual atheism, for such an epicurean deity, "careless of mankind," would be no 'living and true God.' Cp. **xiv. 1.**

5, 6. The security of the wicked. He fears neither God nor man.

5. *His ways* &c.] Rather, as R.V., **His ways are firm at all times.** His plans succeed: he is never harassed by vicissitudes of fortune. Cp. lv. 19, lxxiii. 3—5; Jer. xii. 1, 2.

thy judgments &c.] God, he thinks, is too far away in heaven to interfere. The possibility of retribution does not enter into his calculations or disturb his equanimity. Cp. Job xxii. 12 ff.; and contrast the spirit of Ps. xviii. 22.

enemies] R.V. **adversaries.** Cp. vi. 7, vii. 4, 6, viii. 2.

puffeth at them] Openly by his gestures expressing his scorn and contempt for them. Cp. 'snuff,' Mal. i. 13.

He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: 6
For *I shall* never *be* in adversity.
His mouth is full *of* cursing and deceit and fraud: 7
Under his tongue *is* mischief and vanity.

6. *He hath said*] R.V. he saith, and so in *vv.* 11, 13. He presumes in his carnal self-confidence to use language which the righteous man employs in faithful dependence upon God (xvi. 8, &c.).

for I shall *never* &c.] R.V., To all generations I shall not be in adversity. Hardly in the sense that "pride stifles reason," and "he expects to live for ever" (Cheyne); but rather that he identifies his descendants with himself, and looks forward to the uninterrupted continuance of their prosperity. Cp. xlix. 11; and the promise to the righteous man in xxxvii. 27—29.

7. His sins of tongue; *cursing*,—which may include both malicious imprecation (Job xxxi. 30, R.V.) and perjury (lix. 12: Hos. iv. 2): deceits, the plural, as in xxxviii. 12, expressing their abundance and variety: oppression (lv. 11, lxxii. 14), which he advocates, or abets by false witness (xxvii. 12, xxxv. 11; Ex. xxiii. 1).

Under his tongue, ready for immediate use, is a store of *mischief and* iniquity (vii. 14). This is the usual interpretation; but it seems strange to regard 'under the tongue' as synonymous with 'upon the tongue,' and the use of the phrase in Job. xx. 12 suggests another explanation. Wickedness is there spoken of as a delicious morsel which is kept in the mouth to be enjoyed. (See Prof. Davidson's note.) And similarly here the mention of the mouth as the organ of speech leads up to the thought of the tongue as the organ of taste. Mischief and iniquity are thoroughly to the wicked man's taste. Cp. Prov. xix. 28, which speaks of iniquity as the wicked man's favourite food: and Job xv. 16.

The first half of the verse (according to the LXX) is woven by St Paul into his description of human corruption in Rom. iii. 14.

8—11. The wicked man's crimes. He is described as a brigand, lying in wait to rob; as a lion lurking for its prey; as a hunter snaring his game. His victims are the innocent and defenceless poor.

The reference is probably to the bands of freebooters which, in the absence of a system of police, have always been common in the East. At no time was the country entirely free from them, and in periods of anarchy they would multiply rapidly. See Jud. xi. 3; 1 Sam. xxii. 2; 2 Sam. iv. 2; Hos. vi. 9; St Luke x. 30. The emphatic warning of the wise man to his disciple in Prov. i. 10—18 (a passage which should be studied in illustration of this Psalm) shews that such a life was common, and had strong attractions for young men.

But in all probability the Psalmist has also in view the powerful nobles who plundered their poorer neighbours, and made their lives intolerable by oppressive exactions. They were no better than the professed brigands, and no doubt did not shrink from actual murder.

8 He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages:
In the secret places doth he murder the innocent:
His eyes are privily set against the poor.
9 He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den:
He lieth in wait to catch the poor:
He doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.
10 He croucheth, *and* humbleth himself,
That the poor may fall by his strong *ones*.
11 He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten:
He hideth his face; he will never see *it*.

See the prophets generally, and in particular Micah's bitter invective, ii. 1—11; iii. 1—3. Cp. Ecclus. xiii. 18, 19.

8. **He coucheth in ambush in the villages:**
In the secret places doth he murder the innocent,
His eyes watch privily for the helpless.

The unwalled villages would be most exposed to the raids of marauders; and the country-folk, as Micah shews, suffered most from the oppression of the nobles.

Helpless (R.V.) or *hapless* (R.V. marg.) are good renderings of an obscure word peculiar to this psalm (*vv.* 10, 14).

9. Render:
He lieth in ambush in the secret place as a lion in his lair:
He lieth in ambush to catch the poor:
He catcheth the poor, dragging him off with his net.

The wicked man is now described as a lion, lurking in his lair in the forest till his prey comes near. In the third clause the figure is changed for that of a hunter: probably the victim is dragged off to be sold for a slave.

10. We may render with R.V.
He croucheth, he boweth down,
And the helpless fall by his strong ones.

An obscure verse. According to the rendering of the R.V., which follows the traditional reading (*Qrē*), the figure of the lion is resumed. The word rendered *boweth down* is used of a lion *couching* in Job xxxviii. 40, the whole of which verse should be compared with *vv.* 9, 10. *His strong ones* is explained to mean *his claws*.

But it seems preferable to regard the poor as the subject, and, neglecting the Massoretic accents, to render: **He is crushed, he boweth down and falleth**; (yea) **the helpless** (fall) **by his strong ones**: i.e. the ruffians of the wicked man's retinue. The R.V. marg., *And being crushed*, follows the reading of the text (*Kthībh*), and gives the same sense.

11. **He saith in his heart, God** (*El*) **hath forgotten:**
He hath hidden his face; he hath not seen nor ever will.

Experience, he thinks, confirms the assumption from which he started (*v.* 4), that God will not trouble Himself to interfere: the exact opposite

(ק) Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thine hand: 12
Forget not the humble.
Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God?
He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require *it*. 13
(ר) Thou hast seen *it*; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, 14
To requite *it* with thy hand:
The poor committeth *himself* unto thee;

of the faith of the saints (ix. 12, 18). The last clause means literally, *He hath not seen for ever*: i.e. hath not seen hitherto nor will hereafter.

12—18. An urgent plea that Jehovah will vindicate His own character by action, grounded upon a confident assurance of the present reality of His government. The alphabetical arrangement is here resumed.

12, 13. Stanza of *Qōph*.

12. *Arise*] The usual summons to action. Cp. iii. 7, vii. 6 (notes); ix. 19.

O God] *El*, as in *v.* 11.

lift up thine hand] The attitude of action. Cp. similar phrases in cxxxviii. 7; Ex. vii. 5; Mic. v. 9; and contrast Ps. lxxiv. 11.

forget not the humble] Disprove the calumny of the wicked (*v.* 11). The Qrē *'anāvīm*, 'humble' or 'meek,' is preferable to the Kthībh *'aniyyīm*, 'afflicted' or 'poor.' The spirit in which sufferings have been borne is urged as a plea. Cp. *v.* 17.

13. Why, urges the Psalmist in support of his appeal, has God so long tolerated the blasphemies of the wicked man (*vv.* 3, 4), and by inaction let Himself be misunderstood? The verbs are in the perfect tense, expressing what long has been and still is the case.

he hath said] R.V. and say.

14. Stanza of *Resh*, consisting of one long verse. Originally in all probability there were two verses, as in the other alphabetic stanzas.

Thou hast seen it] Whatever the wicked may imagine to the contrary, arguing from his own limited experience (*v.* 11). Faith triumphs over appearances, for it rests on the unchanging character of God, Who never ceases to 'behold,' to observe all that goes on upon the earth. Cp. xxxiii. 13; xxxv. 22; xciv. 9.

mischief and spite] The words may be understood thus, of the wrong done; or, as in R.V. marg., of the suffering endured, *travail and grief*. The first word inclines rather to the objective, the second to the subjective sense. Perhaps we might render: *mischief and vexation*.

to requite it *with thy hand*] More exactly as R.V., to take it into thy hand. God's observation cannot fail to lead to action. In His own time He will take the matter in hand. Cp. P.B.V., which however, in opposition to the Hebrew accents, connects the words with the following clause, 'That thou mayest take the matter into thine hand: the poor &c.'

the poor] The helpless (*vv.* 8, 10) *abandons* (such is the literal sense

Thou art the helper of the fatherless.

15 (ש) Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil *man*:
Seek out his wickedness *till* thou find none.

16 The LORD *is* King for ever and ever:
The heathen are perished out of his land.

of the word) himself and his cause to God. Who will never abandon him (ix. 10).

thou art] Rather as R.V., **thou hast been.** It is an appeal to experience. The 'fatherless' (or 'orphan') is mentioned as a typical example of the friendless and unprotected, who are under God's special guardianship. Cp. the primitive law of Ex. xxii. 22 ff., reechoed in the latest utterance of prophecy, Mal. iii. 5.

15, 16. Stanza of *Shin*. Prayer for the extermination of evil, based on the facts of faith and history.

15. *Break* &c.] Paralyse his power to do mischief. Cp. xxxvii. 17; Job xxxviii. 15.

of the wicked and the evil man] So the ancient versions, taking the most obvious division of the words. R.V. follows the accentuation of the Hebrew text in rendering, **and as for the evil man, seek out** &c.

seek out &c.] Lit. *when thou requirest his wickedness, thou shalt not find.* The word is the same as that used in ix. 12 and in *vv.* 4, 13. The Psalmist looks forward to a time when the wicked will be powerless to do harm. When God 'makes inquisition' and holds His assize, He will find no crime to punish, cp. xvii. 3. There may be an allusion to the proverbial phrase 'to seek and not find,' used in reference to what has utterly disappeared (xxxvii. 36), but a special word for 'seek' is chosen for the sake of the allusion indicated.

16. The second clause has been variously explained to refer (1) to the past, or (2) to the future (prophetic perfect). If (1) it refers to the past, the Psalmist finds the guarantee for the fulfilment of his prayers and hopes in the extermination of the Canaanites, or, it may be, in the repulse of 'the nations' referred to in ix. 5, 6, 15 ff. As the nations have been driven out before God's people, so the wicked must ultimately give place to the godly, and Jehovah's land will become in fact what it is in name, the Holy Land. Cp. the frequent warnings to Israel that the fate of the Canaanites might be theirs (Deut. viii. 19, 20, &c.). If (2) the clause refers to the future, it is a confident anticipation (expressed as though it were already realised) of the ultimate destruction of the foreign oppressors of Israel, including, it may be supposed, all the godless of whom they are typical.

The first explanation suits the context best. The complaint and prayer of the psalm are directed against wicked oppressors within the nation of Israel, not against foreign enemies. An anticipation of the destruction of such external enemies is foreign to the line of thought. But an appeal to history as the ground of hope for the future is quite in place.

his land] Cp. Lev. xxv. 23; Joel ii. 18.

(ת) LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: 17
Thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:
To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, 18
That the man of the earth may no more oppress.

17, 18. Stanza of *Tav*. God has 'seen' (*v.* 14); He has also 'heard': the prayer of faith cannot remain unanswered.

17. 'The desire of the meek' is contrasted with 'the desire of the wicked' (*v.* 3), which in spite of his boasting is doomed to end in disappointment (cxii. 10).

The second half of the verse may be taken as an explanatory parenthesis: *thou didst prepare* (or *direct*) *their heart* to pray (1 Sam. vii. 3), *thou didst cause thine ear to attend*: or as expressing the further anticipation, *thou wilt establish* (*encourage, comfort*) *their heart: thou wilt* &c.

18. So justice will be done to the orphan (*v.* 14) and the down-trodden (ix. 9); that mortal man which is of the earth may be terrible no more: may no more insolently defy God, and do violence to men. Cp. ix. 19, 20; xxxvii. 35, note.

PSALM XI.

The Psalmist's situation is desperate. His life is in peril. Faint-hearted friends counsel flight. Wickedness is in the ascendant and irresistible. Indignantly he repudiates their suggestion. Jehovah is his protector. It would be the act of unbelief as well as cowardice to seek any other refuge. Triumphantly he proclaims his faith that Jehovah is the righteous Governor of the world, Who will destroy the wicked and welcome the righteous into His Presence.

The points of connexion between this Psalm and Pss. v, vii, x, xvii, should be studied. If they are David's, so may this be. It is strikingly appropriate to the circumstances of his life at the court of Saul, and to this period it should be referred, rather than to the time when Absalom's conspiracy was hatching. David was in a position of responsibility (1 Sam. xviii. 13, 16, 30) which he could not abandon without clear indication that it was his duty to do so; the jealousy of the mad king grew daily, until at last he plainly expressed his wish to be rid of David (1 Sam. xix. 1). Doubtless many of his rivals at the court were ready enough to take his life; but so popular a leader could not be openly murdered. They must wait for an opportunity of despatching him secretly. Meanwhile his friends advised him to secure his safety by flight, and argued that it was hopeless to continue an unequal struggle, when right was subverted by the action of the central authority of the state. But the time for flight had not come, and conscious of his rectitude, David resolves to face the danger in confident assurance that Jehovah will protect him.

The Psalm consists of two equal stanzas of three verses each, with a concluding verse.

i. The suggestions of faint-hearted friends (1—3).
ii. The true ground of confidence (4—6).
iii. The outlook of faith (7).

To the chief Musician, *A Psalm* of David.

11 In the LORD put I my trust:
How say ye to my soul,
Flee *as* a bird *to* your mountain?
2 For lo, the wicked bend *their* bow,
They make ready their arrow upon the string,
That *they* may privily shoot at the upright in heart.
3 If the foundations be destroyed,
What can the righteous do?

1—3. Faith's indignant repudiation of faint-hearted counsel in the hour of danger.

1. *put I my trust*] Rather, have I taken refuge (cp. vii. 1): and therefore it would be an act of unbelief as well as cowardice to seek another asylum in the mountain.

to my soul] To me, as one whose very life is in danger. Cp. iii. 2, note.

Flee as *a bird*] Or, as R.V. marg., *flee ye birds*. David and his companions are addressed, and exhorted to flee to their obvious or accustomed place of refuge in the mountain. But the pronoun *your* should probably be omitted, and *as* inserted. Timorous and defenceless birds supply a graphic figure for the victims of persecution who have no resource but flight. Cp. 1 Sam. xxvi. 20: Lam. iii. 52. The 'mountain' or 'hill-country' with its caves and strongholds was the natural place of retreat for fugitives. See 1 Sam. xiv. 22; xxiii. 14; xxvi. 1; 1 Macc. ii. 28. Possibly 'to flee to the mountain' may have been a proverbial phrase, taken from the narrative of Gen. xix. 17 ff., for the last resource in extremity of peril.

2. The words of the faint-hearted friends continued. They justify their advice by pointing to the treacherous intentions of remorseless enemies. Similar language is used figuratively of slander in lxiv. 3, 4; Jer. ix. 3; but here it may be taken literally of intent to murder. Cp. 1 Sam. xix. 1 ff. For the language cp. vii. 12, 10.

privily] Lit. as R.V., in darkness. LXX, *in a moonless night*.

3. The state, or society, is compared to a building. The foundations upon which it rests (or the pillars which support it) are the fundamental principles of law and order and justice. The figure sometimes denotes nobles, or chief men, as in Is. xix. 10 (R.V.), but the more general explanation is preferable here. Cp. lxxv. 3; lxxxii. 5; Ezek. xxx. 4. When these principles are being subverted, 'what,' asks the voice of despair, 'can the righteous do?' and the form of the question

The LORD *is* in his holy temple,
The LORD'S throne *is* in heaven:
His eyes behold,
His eyelids try, the children of men.
The LORD trieth the righteous:
But the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.

in the original seems to be intended to exclude the possibility of an encouraging answer.

But the verse should probably be rendered (cp. R.V. marg.), *For the foundations are being overthrown; what hath the righteous wrought?* The efforts of the righteous have availed nothing to avert the general anarchy. What then, it is implied, can he hope to effect by remaining in the midst of it at the peril of his life?

4—6. David's answer, justifying his rejection of his friends' advice. They look to earth alone; he looks up to heaven. They judge by the appearance of the moment; his faith beholds the righteous Governor of the world exercising His sovereignty. On earth justice may be suspended or subverted; but the Eternal Judge has not quitted His throne in heaven.

4. More exactly:

Jehovah in his holy temple, Jehovah, whose throne is in heaven,
His eyes behold &c.

The last clause is the predicate on which the emphasis falls. The temple is here heaven, as in xviii. 6; xxix. 9; Mic. i. 2; Hab. ii. 20. There Jehovah sits enthroned in Majesty as King and Judge (ix. 4, 7), surveying the course of human affairs. Cp. x. 14; xiv. 2; cii. 19 ff. The epithet 'holy' emphasises the contrast with earth. The confusions and mistakes and prejudices of earth cannot enter there.

behold] The Heb. word suggests the idea of a discerning, penetrating gaze. The P.B.V., *His eyes consider the poor*, is derived through the Vulg. from the LXX[1].

his eyelids try] The eyelids are contracted when we wish to examine an object closely. 'Try' is a metaphor from refining. He distinguishes at a glance between dross and gold. Cp. vii. 9.

5. Each half of the verse is to be completed from the other. God proves and approves the righteous: He proves and rejects the wicked.

trieth] *Alloweth* in P.B.V. means 'approveth after trial.' Cp. Rom. xiv. 22; 1 Thess. ii. 4.

his soul hateth] Cp. Is. i. 14. God's *soul* is a bold expression for His innermost, essential nature, which cannot do otherwise than hate evil, and of necessity also the evil man, in so far as he surrenders himself to 'love violence,' deliberately choosing evil for his good. Cp. Mic. iii. 2; Rom. i. 32.

[1] The consonants of the word for *poor* (עני) resemble those of the word for *his eyes* (עיניו), and this word appears to have been doubly read and translated by the LXX.

6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone,
And a horrible tempest: *this shall be* the portion of their cup.
7 For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness;
His countenance doth behold the upright.

6. Literally:
Let him rain snares upon the wicked!
Fire and brimstone and scorching blast be the portion of their cup!

A wish takes the place of the simple statement (*he shall rain*) which might have been expected. Cp. xii. 3. May the wicked meet the fate of Sodom, so often alluded to as the typical example of signal judgment upon gross and defiant sin. The language is borrowed from Gen. xix. 24. Cp. Deut. xxix. 23; Ezek. xxxviii. 22. The 'snares' are to entangle them so that they cannot escape from the fire which consumes, and the fatal simoom which suffocates. But possibly we should follow the version of Symmachus in reading *coals of fire* for *snares*. So Cheyne and others. Cp. xviii. 12; and cxl. 10 in a psalm containing other allusions to this psalm).

7. For Jehovah is righteous: he loveth righteous deeds:
The upright shall behold his face.

The character of Jehovah is the ground of the judgement which has been described; and the reward of the upright is contrasted with the punishment of the wicked.

Righteous deeds may denote the manifestations of Jehovah's righteousness (Jud. v. 11; 1 Sam. xii. 7), as well as the righteous acts of men (Is. xxxiii. 15); but the context points to the latter meaning here.

The A.V. rendering of the second line gives a good sense:—He beholds the upright with favour. The E.B.V. follows the ancient versions in its rendering, 'will behold *the thing that is just*.' But usage and parallel passages are decisive in favour of the rendering of R.V. given above. The wicked are banished and destroyed; but the upright are admitted to the presence of Jehovah, as trusted courtiers to the presence of their sovereign (cp. v. 4, 5; xv. 1; xvii. 15; cxl. 13); they gaze upon that Face which is the source of light and joy and salvation (iv. 6; xvi. 11; xliv. 3). It is one of the 'golden sayings' of the Psalter, 'fulfilled' in the revelation of the Gospel. See Matt. v. 8; 1 John iii. 2; Rev. xxii. 4.

PSALM XII.

A prayer for help in an age of apparently universal hypocrisy, dissimulation, and untrustworthiness. The title assigns it to David, who might have written it while he was at the court of Saul, or during his outlaw life. Men like Doeg were in positions of authority. Unscrupulous enemies were poisoning Saul's mind against him (1 Sam. xxvi. 19). The ungrateful citizens of Keilah were ready to betray their deliverer (1 Sam. xxiii. 11). The Ziphites deliberately meditated treachery (1 Sam. xxiii. 19 ff.).

The situation of the writer resembles that described in Ps. v. (*vv.* 5, 6, 9, 10); *v.* 5 should be compared with ix. 18 and x. 5; 'I will arise' (*v.* 5) is the answer to the prayer of iii. 7, vii. 6, ix. 19, x. 12.

But the language is general, and the Psalm might belong to almost any age. Similar complaints are found in Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah. In every period of the Church's history there have been godly men who, separated from friends and persecuted by enemies, have been tempted to say with Elijah, "I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away."

In this psalm prophecy and psalmody meet. The Psalmist speaks to God, and God answers through the Psalmist (*v.* 5). It is no doubt possible that he is quoting some prophetic utterance (cp. lxxxix. 19 ff.), but there is no need of the supposition. He can himself hear God speak, and deliver His word as an authoritative message. Cp. ii. 6, 7 ff., l. 1 ff., lx. 6 ff., lxxxi. 6 ff., lxxxii. 2 ff., xci. 14 ff.

The Psalm falls into two equal divisions, each consisting of two equal stanzas.

i. Prayer for help amid prevailing faithlessness (1, 2). O that insolent braggarts might be exterminated! (3, 4).

ii. Jehovah's promise of help; its purity and preciousness (5, 6). The Psalmist's confidence in the divine guardianship in the midst of unrestrained wickedness (7, 8).

To the chief Musician upon Sheminith, A Psalm of David.

Help, LORD; for the godly *man* ceaseth; 12
For the faithful fail from among the children of men.
They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: 2
With flattering lips *and* with a double heart do they speak.

On the title, **For the Chief Musician, set to the Sheminith** (R.V.), see Introd. pp. xxi, xxv.

1, 2. A cry for help in the midst of prevailing faithlessness.

1. *Help*] Render **save**, as in iii. 7, vi. 4, vii. 1, and elsewhere; and note the connexion with *in safety*, *v.* 5.

for the godly man ceaseth &c.] Godly, or kindly, men are no more: the faithful fail (or as R.V. marg., *faithfulness faileth*) from among the sons of men. Mercy and truth, lovingkindness and trustworthiness, seem to have become extinct. Similar complaints are common in the prophets. See Hos. iv. 1; Mic. vii. 2; Is. lvii. 1, lix. 14 ff.; Jer. v. 1 ff., vii. 28, ix. 2 ff. For the meaning of *godly* see note on iv. 3 and Appendix, Note I. Here it means 'one who practises lovingkindness towards his fellow-men as a religious duty.'

2. Hypocrisy and duplicity are universal. Men's words are *vanity*, or *falsehood*, hollow and unreal. Their flatteries come from 'a double heart,' lit. *a heart and a heart*, which thinks one thing and utters another, and has no constancy or consistency, but thinks one thing to-day and another thing to-morrow. Cp. Prov. xxvi. 24 ff. For the opposite see 1 Chr. xii. 33, 38.

3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips,
And the tongue that speaketh proud *things:*
4 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail;
Our lips *are* our own: who *is* lord over us?
5 For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy,
Now will I arise, saith the LORD;
I will set *him* in safety *from him that* puffeth at him.
6 The words of the LORD *are* pure words:
As silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

3, 4. The prayer for help passes into a prayer for the excision of these false-hearted braggarts. Cp. v. 10.

3. Render: **May Jehovah cut off** &c. Cp. xxxi. 17, 18.

proud things] Lit. as R.V., great things: further defined in *v.* 4.

4. *Who*] Namely, the owners of the flattering lips and boastful tongues. '*Our tongue*,' they say, '*we will make mighty: our lips are with us*,' under our own control, at command as faithful allies; *who is lord over us?* No one can call us to account for our use of them (x. 4). Unscrupulous courtiers appear to be meant, who deliberately propose to obtain their own ends by reckless disregard of truth, e.g. by flattery, slander, false witness, and the like.

5, 6. The Psalmist hears God's answer, and affirms its trustworthiness.

5. Render: **Because of the spoiling of the poor, because of the groaning of the needy.** Cp. Ex. ii. 24.

Now will I arise &c.] Cp. Is. xxxiii. 10. The moment for action has at length come.

I will set him &c.] An obscure clause. Either (1) as R.V., **I will set him in safety at whom they puff.** Cp. x. 5. The despised victim will be put beyond the reach of his tormentors. Or (2) as R.V. marg., *I will set him in the safety he panteth for.* Or perhaps (3) *I will set him in safety when they pant for him*; i.e. pursue him like wild beasts with gaping jaws ready to devour him. Cp. lvi. 1, 2; Am. viii. 4.

6. A general truth with direct application to the promise of the preceding verse. In Jehovah's words there is no dross of flattery or insincerity or falsehood. Unlike the words of men, they are wholly to be relied on.

as *silver tried*] Omit *as*. Silver is a natural emblem of purity and preciousness. The metaphor underlies the language of xviii. 30, cxix. 140, Prov. xxx. 5.

in a furnace of earth] The precise meaning is doubtful. Either (1) **in a furnace on the earth** (R.V.), i.e. a furnace built on the ground, the point of which is not obvious: or (2) *silver refined in a furnace* (*flowing down*) **to the earth** may be meant to picture the bright stream of pure metal flowing from the furnace, shewing that the process of refining has done its work.

Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, 7
Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.
The wicked walk on every side, 8
When the vilest men are exalted.

purified seven times] Again and again till no trace of dross is left. Seven is the number of completeness and perfection. Cp. lxxix. 12; Prov. vi. 31; Is. xxx. 26.

7, 8. Concluding expression of confidence in Jehovah's protection, which is sorely needed when wickedness prevails unchecked.

7. More exactly:

Thou, O Jehovah, wilt preserve them (as xvi. 1);
Thou wilt guard him &c.

The first Thou is emphatic: them refers to the poor and needy of *v.* 5: him in the second line singles out *each one* of the victims of persecution as the object of divine care. Comp. the similar change from plur. (*poor and needy*) to sing. in *v.* 5. But possibly we should follow the LXX and read us, instead of *them* and *him*, or at any rate in place of *him*.

this generation] As the men of one age are commonly distinguished by special characteristics, *generation* acquires an ethical significance, and denotes *kind*, *class*, in good or bad sense. Comp. xiv. 5; Prov. xxx. 11—14; Matt. xvii. 17.

8. Jehovah will preserve the righteous; although **when vileness is exalted among the sons of men**, when worthless or profligate men are raised to positions of authority, the wicked stalk insolently everywhere, unabashed and unrestrained. Cp. xi. 1—3. The Psalmist returns to the thought of the prevailing corruption, from which he started.

PSALM XIII.

From the darkness of despair (*vv.* 1, 2) the Psalmist wins his way through prayer (3, 4) to a joyous hope of ultimate deliverance (5, 6).

His power of endurance is well-nigh spent. Jehovah seems to have forgotten or forsaken him. His own resources are exhausted. If Jehovah does not come to his help, he must succumb, and his enemies will triumph. But past reliance on Jehovah has not been vain; and he ends with a full assurance that he will live to praise Him for renewed deliverance.

Such may have been David's feelings when he had been for some time a hunted fugitive (1 Sam. xxvii. 1). The language is general, but one foe in particular stands out (*vv.* 2, 4) above the rest of his 'adversaries' as specially powerful and relentless (1 Sam. xviii. 29, xxiv. 4, xxvi. 8). If the Psalm is David's, it belongs to a somewhat later time than Ps. vii.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

13 How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever?
How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?
2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
Having sorrow in my heart daily?
How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?
3 Consider *and* hear me, O LORD my God:
Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the *sleep of* death;
4 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him;
And those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

1, 2. A reproachful expostulation in the hour of despair.

1. How long, O LORD, wilt thou forget me for ever? (R.V.) Feeling, not logic, shapes the sentence, combining two questions into a self-contradictory expression. He is tempted to deny faith's confession (ix. 18), and assent to the sneer of the godless (x. 11). He is ready to ask, 'Wilt thou forget me for ever?' but he thrusts the thought away with 'How long?' which implies a termination. In the words of Luther, 'hope despairs and yet despair hopes.' Cp. lxxix. 5, lxxxix. 46.

wilt thou hide thy face] In anger or indifference. Cp. x. 1, 11; and contrast iv. 6, xi. 7.

2. Lit. **How long shall I set counsels in my soul?** devising one plan after another in vain.

daily] The Heb. word means *by day* in contrast to *by night* (xxii. 2). We must either supply *and by night* (it is added in some MSS. of the LXX), or with R.V. render **all the day**, which however is hardly justified by usage. But an easy emendation gives the sense *daily*, which seems to be required by the context.

be exalted] Be in authority and have the upper hand. Cp. xii. 8.

3, 4. A prayer, in calmer tone.

3. Behold (x. 14), instead of hiding Thy face, **answer me** (iii. 4) instead of forgetting my need.

Lighten mine eyes] Revive and quicken me. The eyes are the index of vital energy. They 'waste away,' they lose their light, they 'are darkened,' by sickness or sorrow (vi. 7, xxxviii. 10; Lam. v. 17). They are 'enlightened' when strength and spirits are restored (1 Sam. xiv. 27, 29; Ezr. ix. 8). It is the light of God's face, the illumination of His love and favour, which is the source of life (iv. 6; xxxi. 16; xxxvi. 9).

4. and *those* &c.] R.V., **Lest mine adversaries rejoice when I am moved.** Cp. xxxviii. 16. And by their triumph, as the emphatic contrast of the following verse implies, the honour of God Whom he trusts will suffer.

But I have trusted in thy mercy;
My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.
I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

5, 6. The joy of deliverance.

5. More exactly:
But as for me, in thy lovingkindness do I trust. Cp. v. 7.

My heart shall rejoice...I will sing] Better: let my heart rejoice...let me sing. Faith has triumphed. He can look forward with confidence. But humility transforms his resolution to give thanks into a prayer.

Because he hath dealt bountifully with me] He looks back from the stand-point of deliverance granted. P.B.V. follows the LXX in adding from vii. 17, *Yea, I will praise the Name of the Lord most Highest.*

PSALM XIV.

The deep and universal corruption of mankind is traced to its source in their failure to seek after God (1—3). This corruption is illustrated by the cruel treatment to which 'the people of Jehovah' have been subjected (4). But He proves Himself their defender (5, 6); and the Psalm concludes with a prayer that He will gladden Israel with a full deliverance (7).

It is commonly supposed that the Psalmist is describing the depravity of his own age and his own country. But at least in *vv.* 1—3 it is of mankind at large (*the sons of men, v.* 2) that he is speaking. His words recall the great examples of corruption in the primeval world; in the days before the Flood, at Babel, in Sodom.

The reference of *vv.* 4—6 is less clear. It depends on the meaning assigned to 'my people' in *v.* 4. (1) 'My people' may mean the faithful few in Israel, the godly poor, who were devoured by heartless oppressors. In this case *vv.* 5, 6 must refer to the future, prophetically anticipating the judgement which will overtake these godless tyrants. (2) If however 'my people' means the nation of Israel, *vv.* 4—6 must refer either to some present oppression by foreign enemies and their anticipated discomfiture; or to a typical example of oppression and deliverance in the past, such as that of Israel in Egypt. If we are right in supposing that *vv.* 1—3 refer to the primitive history of mankind, the latter interpretation seems preferable. The Psalmist naturally passes on to the oppression of Israel in Egypt as the next great instance of defiant antagonism to Jehovah. *Vv.* 5, 6 are then to be explained as a historical allusion to the destruction of the Egyptians at the Red Sea: and the memory of that great national deliverance leads up to the concluding prayer of *v.* 7.

The Psalm recurs in Book ii as Ps. liii, with some variations. *Elohim* (God) is substituted for Jehovah (LORD) in accordance with the general practice of the editor of that book (see Introd. p. lv f.): and *v.* 5 differs widely from xiv. 5, 6. Is this difference due to corruption of text or to intentional change? The curious similarity of the letters is in

favour of the view that the text of Ps. 53 is a restoration of characters which had become partially obliterated: but it is equally possible that the editor of the collection intentionally altered the text in order to introduce a fresh historical reference, probably to the overthrow of Sennacherib.

The structure of the Psalm resembles that of Ps. xi. Two equal stanzas of three verses each, with a concluding verse.

The title of Ps. liii runs "For the Chief Musician; set to Mahalath. Maschil of David." *Mahalath* (cp. title of Ps. lxxxviii) may mean *sickness*, and is best explained as the initial words of some well-known song, to the melody of which the Psalm was set; rather than as denoting a mournful style of music, or some kind of instrument. On *Maschil* see Introd. p. xix.

To the chief Musician, *A Psalm* of David.

14 The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God.
They are corrupt, they have done abominable works.
There is none that doeth good.

1—3. The universal depravity of mankind, and its cause.

1. *The fool*] A class of men, not a particular individual. The word *nābāl* here used for 'fool' denotes moral perversity, not mere ignorance or weakness of reason. 'Folly' is the opposite of 'wisdom' in its highest sense. It may be predicated of forgetfulness of God or impious opposition to His will (Deut. xxxii. 6, 21; Job ii. 10; xlii. 8; Ps. lxxiv. 18, 22): of gross offences against morality (2 Sam. xiii. 12, 13): of sacrilege (Josh. vii. 15): of ungenerous churlishness (1 Sam. xxv. 25). For a description of the 'fool' in his 'folly' see Is. xxxii. 5, 6 (A.V. *vile person, villainy*).

hath said in his heart] It is his deliberate conclusion, upon which he acts. Cp. x. 6, 11, 13.

There is *no God*] Cp. x. 4. This is hardly to be understood of a speculative denial of the existence of God; but rather of a practical disbelief in His moral government. Cp. lxxiii. 11; Jer. v. 12; Zeph. i. 12; Rom. i. 28 ff.

They are corrupt &c.] More emphatically the original: **They corrupted their doings, they made them abominable, there was none doing good.** Mankind in general are the subject of the sentence. Abandoning belief in God, they depraved their nature, and gave themselves up to practices which God abhors (v. 6). 'Corrupted' describes the self-degradation of their better nature; 'made abominable' the character of their conduct in the sight of God. Such was the condition of the world before the Flood. See Gen. vi. 11, 12; and with the last line of this verse, cp. Gen. vi. 5. P.B.V. follows LXX and Vulg. in adding *no not one* as in *v.* 5. For *doings* Ps. liii has *iniquity*:—'they did abominable iniquity.'

2. For a while Jehovah as it were overlooked the growing corruption. At length He 'looked down' (xxxiii. 13, 14). So in the yet simpler

The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of 2
men,
To see if there were *any* that did understand, *and*
seek God.
They are all gone aside, they are *all* together be- 3
come filthy:
There is none that doeth good, no, not one.
Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? 4

language of the Pentateuch He is said to have 'come down to see' the wickedness of Babel and Sodom (Gen. xi. 5; xviii. 21; and note the use of 'look down' in the latter narrative though in a different connexion, xviii. 16). Are not these typical examples of human corruption in the Psalmist's mind? 'Jehovah looked down...to see if there were any that did understand (or *deal wisely*, R.V. marg., for the verb often denotes right action as well as right purpose), **that did seek God.**' Cp. ix. 10. The use of *God*, not *Jehovah*, is significant. It is of mankind in general, not of Israel, that the Psalmist is speaking. God made Himself known through the voice of conscience, and in the works of creation, but men would not follow the light of conscience, or read the book of nature. See Acts xiv. 17; xvii. 27; Rom. i. 19 ff.

3. The result of the investigation. **All were turned aside** from the path of right (Ex. xxxii. 8; Judg. ii. 17): **together had they become tainted**, a word which in Arabic means *to go bad* or *turn sour*, but in Hebr. is used only in a moral sense, here and in Job xv. 16.

Three verses follow here in the P.B.V. which are not in the Hebrew text, and are rightly omitted in the A.V. The first three verses of the Psalm are quoted by St Paul in Rom. iii. 10—12, in proof of the universal depravity of mankind. He supplements them by further quotations from Ps. v. 9; cxl. 3; x. 7; Is. lix. 7, 8; Ps. xxxvi. 1: and this cento of passages was at an early date interpolated in the LXX, from which it passed to the Vulgate, and thence to the P.B.V. The addition is found in the Vatican and Sinaitic MSS. (B and ℵ), and other MSS. which represent the older unrevised text; but was rightly obelized by Origen, and has disappeared from the Alexandrian MS. (A) and the mass of later MSS.

4—6. The corruption of men exemplified in their oppression of Jehovah's people. Its condign punishment.

4. Jehovah Himself speaks. The first clause may be taken as in A.V., 'Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?' Are they so ignorant that they cannot distinguish between right and wrong? Cp. *v.* 2 and lxxxii. 5. But a much better connexion with *v.* 5 is gained by rendering, *Were not all the workers of iniquity made to know?* (or, following the ancient versions in a change of the vocalisation, *shall not...be made to know?*) i.e. taught by sharp experience to know their error. Then *v.* 5 follows as the answer to the question. 'Yes, indeed! there

Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread,
And call not upon the LORD.
5 There were they in great fear:
For God *is* in the generation of the righteous.
6 You have shamed the counsel of the poor,
Because the LORD *is* his refuge.

&c.' For this pregnant sense of *know*, cp. Hos. ix. 7; Judg. viii. 16 (*taught*, lit. *made to know*).

who eat up &c.] Lit. *eating my people they eat bread*. The A.V. follows the ancient versions in understanding this to mean, 'they devour my people as naturally as they take their daily food.' But the words seem rather to mean, 'they live by devouring my people.' Cp. Mic. iii. 1—3; Is. iii. 14 f. And this they do without regard to Jehovah.

But who are meant by *my people* and the *workers of iniquity*? Possibly the godly few who alone deserve the name of Jehovah's people (Micah ii. 9; iii. 3, 5; and often in the prophets), and the nobles who oppress them. But it is more natural to explain 'my people' of the nation of Israel; and in this case 'the workers of iniquity' must be foreign oppressors, or, if we assume a reference to past history as in *vv.* 1—3, the Egyptians. In favour of this view it should be noted that Israel is constantly called 'my people' in Ex. iii—x; and the last clause of the verse is illustrated by Ex. v. 2. Cp. also Jer. ii. 3.

5. This verse is commonly explained to refer to the future, the perfect tense expressing the certain assurance of the Psalmist that judgement will be executed. Cp. xxxvi. 12. But it is more natural to refer it to the past. 'There' points emphatically to some signal instance in which panic terror and overwhelming calamity overtook 'the workers of iniquity.' If *v.* 4 may be understood of the oppression of Israel in Egypt, *v.* 5 will refer to the overthrow of the Egyptians in the Red Sea (Ex. xiv. 24, 25). Ps. liii. 5 adds *where no fear was*, no natural cause for alarm.

for God &c.] Present among them to defend them. 'The generation' (see on xii. 7) 'of the righteous' is synonymous with 'my people;' either the nation, which might be so described in respect of its calling, and in contrast to its oppressors: or the godly part of it. Cp. cxviii. 15.

6. *You have shamed*] R.V., Ye put to shame. You deride the resort of the afflicted to Jehovah as mere folly. But the word usually means to *frustrate* or *confound*: and the line may be explained, 'Would ye frustrate the counsel of the poor? Nay! for Jehovah' &c. Cp. R.V. marg., which gives *But* for *Because*.

the poor] Or, afflicted. Cp. ix. 12: and Ex. iii. 7, 17; iv. 31.

In Ps. liii the equivalent of *vv.* 5, 6 reads thus:

"For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee;
Thou hast put them to shame, because God hath rejected them."

The bones of Israel's enemies lie bleaching upon the field of battle, where their bodies were left unburied (Ezek. vi. 5). This can hardly be an anticipation of some future defeat. It must rather be an allusion to some historic event; and it at once suggests the miraculous annihila-

O that the salvation of Israel *were come* out of Zion! 7
When the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people,
Jacob shall rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

tion of Sennacherib's great army. The text appears to have been altered by the editor of Book II to introduce a reference to the most famous example in later times of the discomfiture of worldly arrogance venturing to measure its strength with Jehovah. With this reading it is clear that *v.* 4 must refer to the nation and its enemies, not to oppressors and their victims within the nation.

7. Concluding prayer for the deliverance of Israel.

out of Zion] The dwelling-place of Jehovah. See note on iii. 4.

When the LORD *bringeth back* &c.] Or, as R.V. marg., *when the* LORD *returneth to the captivity of his people.* At first sight these words appear to fix the date of the Psalm in the period of the Exile (cxxvi. 1). Nor does the first line of the verse exclude such a view. For the exiled turned to Zion even in her desolation (Dan. vi. 10; 1 Kings viii. 44), and from thence Jehovah might be expected to restore His people. But (1) it is very probable that the phrase rendered *bring back the captivity* means rather *restore the fortunes.* This meaning suits all the passages in which it occurs, while *turn the captivity* does not, except in the figurative sense of *restoring prosperity.* See e.g. Job xlii. 10; Ezek. xvi. 53; Zeph. ii. 7. And (2) even if *turn the captivity* is the true meaning, the phrase is used by Amos (ix. 14) and Hosea (vi. 11) long before the Babylonish Captivity.

v. 7 is frequently regarded as a later liturgical addition; and certainly it does not cohere very closely with the rest of the Psalm. But some conclusion is needed. The Psalm can hardly have ended abruptly with *v.* 6.

Jacob shall rejoice, &c.] Properly a wish or prayer (cp. xiii. 5, 6): **let Jacob rejoice, and Israel be glad.**

PSALM XV.

Who is worthy to be a citizen of Zion, to dwell in the immediate presence of Jehovah, to enjoy His protection and blessing (*v.* 1)? The question is first answered in general terms (*v.* 2). None but the man of integrity, justice, and truthfulness. Then, in *vv.* 3—5, special instances are given, illustrating the way in which his conduct has been governed by these principles. The Psalm concludes with a promise of blessing.

The fulfilment of man's duty to his neighbour is a primary condition of fellowship with God. It is in this that his 'integrity' (see on *v.* 2) is tested and finds expression. Cp. Matt. xix. 16 ff.; Rom. xiii. 8—10; 1 John iv. 20, 21; and the Epistle of St James generally.

The Psalm is closely related to Ps. xxiv, which is generally thought to have been written for the translation of the Ark to the tent which David had prepared for it in Zion (2 Sam. vi. 17), and it may belong to the same period. The title *holy mountain* is no objection to this view.

It does not necessarily imply that the Ark had already long been there. Zion would at once be consecrated by Jehovah's Presence. And such a solemn occasion would be a most fitting opportunity for inquiring what kind of conduct was required of those into whose midst a Holy God had come or was about to come (Lev. xi. 44, 45).

Compare generally xxiv. 3—5; v. 4—7; ci; Is. xxxiii. 13—16.

This Psalm is fitly appointed as one of the Proper Psalms for Ascension Day. Christ entered into the Presence of God, after fulfilling all its requirements in a perfect human life.

A Psalm of David.

15 LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?
Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?
2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness,

1. More exactly:

Jehovah, who shall sojourn in thy tent?
Who shall dwell in thy holy mountain?

Who is worthy to be received as Jehovah's guest, to enjoy His protection and hospitality, to dwell in the place which He has consecrated by His Presence? Cp. v. 4. It is not as a mere form of speech that the Psalmist addresses Jehovah. By this appeal he at once places himself and his readers in immediate relation to Jehovah. The question is asked of Him, and the answer is given as in His Presence.

In thy tent might be wholly metaphorical and mean no more than *in thy abode*, but here where it stands in parallelism to *thy holy mountain*, it is natural to see a reference to 'the tent' which David pitched for the Ark on Mount Zion. Cp. xxvii. 5, 6. 'Sojourn' commonly denotes a temporary stay, but not necessarily so (lxi. 4); the special point here lies in the protection which the guest in Oriental countries claims from his host. "The Arabs give the title of *jār allāh* to one who resides in Mecca beside the Caaba." Robertson Smith's *Religion of the Semites*, p. 77.

Not merely ministers at the sanctuary or even worshippers are meant, but all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who were often too prone to assume that God's presence among them was a guarantee of security, instead of recognising that it demanded holiness on their part (Mic. iii. 11). Spiritually, the question concerns all who would draw near to God.

2. The conditions of access stated positively. The man must be 'integer vitae scelerisque purus.'

He that walketh uprightly] Or, *perfectly*. *Integrity* is the rule of his life in relation to God as well as man. The word *tāmīm* means (1) *complete*, (2) *without blemish*, of sacrificial victims, (3) in a moral sense, *perfect*, *sincere*, *blameless*. It includes whole-hearted devotion to God, and complete integrity in dealing with men. Cp. Gen. xvii. 1; Deut. xviii. 13; Ps. xviii. 23, ci. 2, 6, cxix. 1; vii. 8, xxvi. 1, 11;

And speaketh the truth in his heart.
He that backbiteth not with his tongue, 3
Nor doeth evil to his neighbour,
Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour
In whose eyes a vile *person* is contemned; 4
But he honoureth them that fear the LORD.
He that sweareth to *his own* hurt, and changeth not.

Matt. v. 48. The Sept rendering is *ἄμωμος*, for which comp. Eph. i. 4: Col. i. 22, &c.

and worketh righteousness] Cp. Acts x. 35; 1 John iii. 7.

and speaketh the truth in his heart] Truth is the substance of his thoughts. But it is preferable to render **speaketh truth with his heart**. He speaks truth, and his whole heart goes along with it, unlike the double-hearted flatterers of xii. 2.

3. In the preceding verse the present participle is used; but here the perfect tense, describing how his actual behaviour has been governed by the principles of truth and justice.

He that hath had no slander on his tongue,
Nor done evil to his fellow,
Nor taken up reproach against his neighbour.

Neighbour in A.V. represents two different words. *Friend* (R.V.) however is somewhat too strong for the first, which denotes anyone with whom he is associated in the intercourse of life. The general sense of the last line is clear. He has not made his neighbour's faults or misfortunes the object of his ridicule or sarcasm (lxix. 20). The precise meaning is however not quite certain. Either (1) *uttered* reproach, or (2) *taken up*, and given currency to, what might otherwise have lain unheeded; or (3), as is most probable, *loaded* his neighbour with reproach, adding to the burden of his trouble (lxix. 7).

4. Render with R.V.,

In whose eyes a reprobate is despised.

The truthfulness of his character is shewn in his estimate of men. The world's false estimates are one of the evils which will disappear in the Messianic age (Is. xxxii. 5 ff.). *A reprobate*, one who is not good metal but worthless dross (Jer. vi. 30), he treats with well-merited contempt, while 'he honoureth those that fear Jehovah.'

By the Targum and some commentators, ancient and modern, the clause is rendered, *despised is he in his own eyes, rejected*, which is well paraphrased in P.B.V. "He that setteth not by himself, but is lowly in his own eyes;" cp. 2 Sam. vi. 22. But (1) the words 'despicable reprobate' are such as David could hardly use to express humility and self-abasement; and (2) the contrast required by the parallelism is not 'he despises himself and honours others,' but 'he abhors the base and honours the godly,' i.e. shews right discernment in his regard for men. Cp. xvi. 3; 1 Sam. ii. 30.

He that *sweareth* &c.] **Though he hath sworn to his own hurt, he changeth not.** He performs his oaths and vows without modification

5 *He that* putteth not out his money to usury,
Nor taketh reward against the innocent.
He that doeth these *things* shall never be moved.

or rebatement, even though they may have been rashly made and prove to be to his own disadvantage. Comp. the phrase in the Law for the expiation of rash oaths (Lev. v. 4), "If any one swear rashly with his lips *to do evil* or to do good." Any 'changing' of animals devoted by vows (which were of the nature of oaths) was expressly forbidden (Lev. xxvii. 10). Here the reference is quite general.

The LXX, Vulg., and Syr. render, by a slight change of vocalisation, *to his fellow* (cp. *v.* 3): and P.B.V. (as in lxxxiv. 7) combines both renderings in its paraphrase, 'He that sweareth *unto his neighbour* and disappointeth him not, *though it were to his own hindrance*.'

5. He that hath not put out his money for usury,
Nor taken bribes against the innocent.

Two of the most common and flagrant offences against justice. Cp. Is. xxxiii. 15; Ezek. xxii. 12. Taking interest was forbidden by the Law in dealing with a fellow-countryman as an unbrotherly act (Lev. xxv. 36, 37; cp. Ex. xxii. 25; Ezek. xviii. 17), but allowed in dealing with foreigners (Deut. xxiii. 19, 20). Cp. xxxvii. 26, cxii. 5. For a survey of opinion on the subject in the Christian Church see *Dict. of Christian Antiquities*, Art. *Usury*, or Cunningham's *Christian Opinion on Usury*. The positive rule of the O.T. has become obsolete under the circumstances of modern society, but the principle which underlies it is still of obligation.

Bribery has always been the curse of Oriental countries. For the laws against it see Deut. xxvii. 25; Ex. xxiii. 7, 8; Deut. xvi. 19; and comp. numerous passages in the prophets.

shall never be moved] The Psalmist's conclusion goes a step further than his opening question. Such a man as he has described will not only be admitted to fellowship with Jehovah, but under His protection will enjoy unshaken prosperity. Cp. xvi. 8.

PSALM XVI.

This Psalm is a joyous profession of faith and hope, springing from the sense of a living fellowship with Jehovah. The danger, if special danger there was, which prompted the prayer of *v.* 1, lies entirely in the background. The Psalmist's whole soul is possessed and kindled by the thought that Jehovah is his highest good.

It has been suggested that the Psalm was written by David during his outlaw life. He had been banished from his share in the inheritance of Jehovah, and exposed to the danger of apostasy (1 Sam. xxvi. 19, R.V. marg.). In this hour of trial he triumphs in the thought that Jehovah Himself is the portion of his inheritance, a fairer portion than the goodliest fields and vineyards which could have fallen to his lot (*vv.* 5, 6); and he energetically repudiates the idea of yielding to the temptation to serve another god (*v.* 4).

There are many links of connexion (see Introd. to Ps. xvii) between this Psalm and Ps. xvii, and they may with good reason be assigned to the same author. As Ps. xvii may with much probability be referred to the time of David's persecution by Saul, the presumption in favour of the Davidic authorship of Ps. xvi is strengthened.

Many critics however refer both Psalms to a much later period. Ewald groups together xvii, xvi, xlix (in this order), and on the ground of language and contents places them in the Exile.

If, as is often assumed to be the case, xvi. 9—11 and xvii. 15 explicitly declare the Psalmist's belief in a resurrection and a future life of blessedness, in sharp contrast to such passages as vi. 5, xxx. 9, lxxxviii. 10—12, these Psalms could hardly be placed earlier than the Exile. Delitzsch indeed, while admitting that the doctrine of a Resurrection does not appear in pre exilic times as a truth of revelation, asks why it should not appear in Davidic Psalms as 'a bold postulate of faith.' But if the line of interpretation adopted below is correct, the Psalmist's thoughts are to be viewed from a different stand-point altogether. "His antithesis is not this world and the next, but life with God and life without God." (Cheyne.)

The Psalm falls into three divisions.

i. The Psalmist grounds his prayer for protection on his relation to Jehovah. Who alone is the source of happiness. His delight is in the society of the faithful; with apostates he will have no fellowship (1—4).

ii. The thought that Jehovah is his sole good, the source of all his weal, is taken up and developed (5—8).

iii. Secure in this faith he anticipates a life of true felicity in unbroken fellowship with Jehovah (9—11).

For a valuable exposition of this Psalm by Prof. W. Robertson Smith see *The Expositor*, 1876, Vol. IV. pp. 341 ff.

Michtam of David.

Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust. 16
O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou *art* my Lord: 2

On the title *Michtam* see Introd. p. xx.

1, 2. The Psalmist's prayer and profession of faith.

1. *Preserve me*] Not that he is at the moment in special danger; but only in God's keeping (xii. 7; xvii. 8) can soul and body be safe.

God] *El*, as in v. 4; xvii. 6.

for in thee &c.] **For in thee have I taken refuge.** God is responsible for protecting His liegeman. See note on vii. 1, and cp. xvii. 7.

2. The Massoretic Text reads *thou* (fem.) *hast said*, assuming that the poet holds colloquy with himself, and addresses his soul, as in xlii. 5; Lam. iii. 24 (a passage evidently based on this psalm). So the Targum. But an ellipse of *O my soul* cannot be grammatically justified; and R.V. is certainly right in reading **I have said**, with LXX, Vulg., Syr., Jer. Cp. xxxi. 14; xci. 2; cxl. 6.

my Lord] The confession of Jehovah's *servant* (cp. xxxv. 23), in

My goodness *extendeth* not to thee;
3 *But* to the saints that *are* in the earth,
And *to* the excellent, in whom *is* all my delight.

contrast to the self-asserting independence of xii. 4. R.V. marg. *the Lord* is possible, but less satisfactory.

my goodness extendeth not to thee] Render with R.V., I have no good beyond thee. "Not merely is God the source of all his weal, but everything which he recognises as a true good. God actually contains within Himself" (Robertson Smith). Cp. lxxiii. 25. The P.B.V. *my goods are nothing unto thee* (cp. l. 9 ff.) follows LXX and Vulg., *τῶν ἐγαθῶν μου οὐ χρείαν ἔχεις*: *bonorum meorum non eges.*

3, 4. The Psalmist's society.

3. A difficult verse, the text of which appears to be corrupt.

(1) The best rendering is that of R.V. It is true that it can only be wrung from the Massoretic text by some violence, but an easy emendation removes the grammatical difficulty.

As for the saints [lit. *holy ones*] that are in the earth [or, *land*]
They are the excellent [*nobles*] in whom is all my delight.

From God in heaven the Psalmist turns to men on earth. The true 'nobles' (Judg. v. 13) in whose society he delights, are not the wealthy or powerful in the world's estimation, but 'the holy': those in whom Israel's calling to be 'a holy nation' (Ex. xix. 6) has been actually realised. Cp. xv. 4. These he proceeds to contrast with apostates (*v.* 4). For them nothing but calamity is in store: with them and their worship he will have nothing to do.

(2) We may however (with R.V. marg.) connect *v.* 3 with *v.* 2, thus: (I have said) unto [or, *of*] the saints &c., they are the excellent &c. The general sense will remain the same as in (1).

(3) Combining the two alternatives in R.V. marg., we may connect *v.* 3 both with *v.* 2 and with *v.* 4 thus: (I have said) unto the saints &c., and the excellent in whom is all my delight: their sorrows &c. Secure in his own choice of Jehovah he warns others against the fatal consequences of apostasy, and repudiates the idea of it for himself. In this case it is possible that *saints* may mean *holy* by calling, though not necessarily in character; and *excellent* may mean *nobles* in rank only.

(4) Taking the second alternative of R.V. marg. only, we may render: As for the saints ..and the excellent in whom is all my delight: their sorrows &c. So Ewald, who explains, "*This* seems most profoundly to distress him, that the very Israelites, who ought to be the saints and pass for such...the noble, princely men, whom he especially so intensely loves, even these begin to betake themselves increasingly to heathenism." But it is difficult to suppose that he would speak of men who were falling into idolatry in language such as this. (4) may safely be rejected; and (1) is simpler than (2) and (3), and deserves the preference.

(5) Of the host of conjectural emendations it will suffice to mention

Their sorrows shall be multiplied *that* hasten *after* another 4
god:
Their drink offerings of blood will I not offer,
Nor take up their names into my lips.
The LORD *is* the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: 5
Thou maintainest my lot.

that of Baethgen, which is based on the LXX: '*Unto the saints which are in his land doth Jehovah shew honour: all his delight is in them.*' It gives a good contrast to *v.* 4, but is not convincing.

4. *Their sorrows*] This, and not *their idols* (Targ. Symm. Jer.), is the right rendering. Cp. xxxii. 10; 1 Tim. vi. 10.

that *hasten* after *another* god] The Heb. cannot be so rendered. Rightly R.V., that exchange *the* LORD for another *god*. Cp. cvi. 20; and the exact parallel in Jer. ii. 11. Less probable is R.V. marg., *give gifts for;* for though the verb is used of giving a dowry for a wife (Ex. xxii. 16), and marriage is a common figure for the relationship between God and His people, the wife in this figure always represents the people.

Their drink offerings of blood] Variously explained of libations accompanying human sacrifices, or libations of blood offered in idolatrous rituals instead of oil and wine, or libations offered with blood-stained hands and therefore abominable (Is. i. 15; lix. 3); but probably meaning that their libations are as detestable as though they were composed of blood. Cp. Is. lxvi. 3.

nor take up &c.] R.V., nor take their names upon my lips. Not the idolaters' names, but the names of their gods, which are the expression of their religion. "In Semitic antiquity the very name of a god included a predication of his power, dignity, or virtues; so that even to utter such names as Baal and Molech, that is *Lord* and *King*, was an act of homage." (Robertson Smith.) Cp. Ex. xxiii. 13; Hos. ii. 17; Zech. xiii. 2.

5, 6. Jehovah is the Psalmist's portion.

5. *the portion* &c.] Lit. *the portion of my share and my cup:* i.e. my allotted portion and cup. The word rendered *share* denotes *a portion assigned*, whether of land or property or food. The A.V., *portion of mine inheritance*, implies that Jehovah is compared to the share allotted him in the distribution of the land, a view supported by 5 *b*, 6; but *my cup* suggests rather the idea of a portion of food: Jehovah is all that he needs to satisfy hunger and thirst. Comp. xlii. 2; John vi. 35; and contrast xi. 6.

Thou maintainest my lot] Lit. *thou holdest fast my lot.* My welfare is in Thy hand; no man can rob me of it. But the form of the word rendered *maintainest* is anomalous; and context and parallelism seem to require a further statement of what God *is* for the Psalmist rather than what He *does* for him. Hence some critics render, *Thou art the possession of my lot.*

6 The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant *places;*
Yea, I have a goodly heritage.
7 I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel:
My reins also instruct me *in* the night seasons.
8 I have set the LORD always before me:
Because *he is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth:
My flesh also shall rest in hope.

The language used here reminds us of the Levites, who had no portion or inheritance, but Jehovah was their portion (Num. xviii. 20; Deut. x. 9; xviii. 1). Israel was a nation of priests (Ex. xix. 6); and spiritually, Jehovah was the portion of Israel (Jer. x. 16), and of individual Israelites (lxxiii. 26; cxix. 57; cxlii. 5; Lam. iii. 24).

6. *The lines* &c.] Portions of land measured by line and distributed by lot. The language is still figurative. Jehovah is to him as the choicest of possessions in the goodly land. (*v.* 11; xxvii. 4; xc. 17; Prov. iii. 17; Jer. iii. 19.)

Yea &c.] The peculiar phrase in the original expresses his conscious sense of the beauty of his heritage.

7, 8. The mutual relation of the Psalmist and Jehovah.

7. *given me counsel*] Taught me to choose Him and to follow Him. Cp. xxxii. 8 (R.V.); lxxiii. 24.

my reins also &c.] This clause may be taken as still depending on *I will bless the* LORD, and rendered, yea, that in the night seasons my reins have instructed me. In the quiet hours of the night God admonishes and instructs him through the voice of conscience. Cp. iv. 4; xvii. 3. *The reins* stand for the organs of emotion, the feelings and conscience. 'Heart and reins' denote the whole innermost self, thought and will (vii. 9).

8. The true 'practice of the Presence of God' (cxix. 30; xviii. 22). The LXX has, *I beheld the Lord always before my face.*

at my right hand] As advocate (cix. 31), or champion (cx. 5; cxxi. 5). A warrior defending another person would naturally stand on his right.

9—11. The blessed outcome of this fellowship is joy, confidence, progress.

9. *my glory*] i.e. my soul. See note on vii. 5. The LXX renders freely *my tongue.*

my flesh also shall rest in hope] So the Vulg., *insuper et caro mea requiescet in spe.* Beautiful and suggestive as this rendering is, it is inaccurate and misleading, and must be replaced by that of R.V.

My flesh also shall dwell in safety (marg. *securely*).

Cp. Jer., *et caro mea habitavit* [v.l. *habitabit*] *confidenter.*

Dwell in safety is a phrase repeatedly used of a life of undisturbed security in the promised land. See Deut. xxxiii. 12, 28; Prov. i. 33;

For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; 10
Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.
Thou wilt shew me the path of life: 11
In thy presence *is* fulness of joy;
At thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.

Jer. xxiii. 6; xxxiii. 16. Fellowship with Jehovah guarantees outward security as well as inward joy. The words do not refer, primarily at least, to the rest of the body in the grave in the hope of a joyful resurrection. *Flesh* does not denote the dead corpse, but the living organism in and through which the soul works: together with heart and soul it makes up the whole man (lxiii. 1; lxxiii. 26; lxxxiv. 2; cp. 1 Thess. v. 23).

10. Once more the translation must be revised;
For thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol;
Neither wilt thou suffer thy beloved one to see the pit.

Jehovah will not surrender him to the unseen world, which is like some monster gaping for its prey. He can plead, as one of Jehovah's *beloved ones* (*chasīd*, see on iv. 3, and Appendix, Note I) for the exercise of His lovingkindness (xvii. 7). The text (*Kthībh*) has *thy loved ones* (plur.), but the traditional reading (*Qrē*) *thy loved one* (sing.) is supported by all the versions and required by the context.

The word *shachath*, rendered *corruption* by LXX, Vulg., and Jerome, probably means *the pit* (R.V. marg.) i.e. the grave. 'Pit' *must* be its meaning in many passages (e.g. vii. 15; xxx. 9; Prov. xxvi. 27), and *may* be its meaning always. *Shachath* might be derived from a root meaning *to destroy* (not properly *to decay*), but it is unnecessary to assume that the same form has two derivations and senses. 'To see the pit' (xlix. 9) = 'to see (i.e. experience) death,' lxxxix. 48.

11. *Thou wilt shew me* &c.] Lit. **Thou wilt cause me to know** (cxliii. 8) **the path of life**: not only preserve me from death, but lead me onward in that fellowship with Thee which alone is worthy to be called LIFE. See Prov. x. 17; xv. 24: Matt. vii. 14; John xvii. 3. 'The path of life' is not merely a path which leads to life, but one in which life is to be found. It is 'the path of righteousness' (Prov. xii. 28). 'The way of life' is frequently contrasted in the Book of Proverbs with ways that lead to Sheol and death. Cp. too Deut. xxx. 15. It leads onward in the light of God's Presence; and in that Presence is *satisfying fulness of joys*. Cp. xvii. 15; xxi. 6; iv. 6, 7; Prov. xix. 23.

at thy right hand] R.V. rightly, **in thy right hand**, as the sole Dispenser of all lasting good. Cp. Prov. iii. 16. The world's joys fade; God's joys alone are eternal.

Comp. Hooker's noble words (*Eccl. Pol.* i. 11. 2): "Then are we happy when fully we enjoy God, as an object wherein the powers of our souls are satisfied even with everlasting delight; so that although we be men, yet by being unto God united we live as it were the life of God."

Vv. 8–11 were quoted by St Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 25–28), and *v.* 10*b* by St Paul at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii. 35), a-

a prophecy of Christ's resurrection. The quotation is made from the LXX., which is a free rendering of the Hebrew. St Peter shews that David's glowing words of faith and hope (the argument will be the same if the psalm was the work of some other writer) were not fully realised in himself. He did not finally escape from death. Were his words then a mere idle dream? No! Guided by the Holy Ghost he 'looked forward' to Christ. Over Him Whose fellowship with God was perfect and unbroken by sin, death could have no dominion (Acts ii. 24). In His Resurrection the words first found their adequate realisation, their fulfilment. But their prophetic character does not exclude their primary reference to the Psalmist's own faith and hope.

But the question must be asked, What was the meaning which the Psalmist's words had for himself? Does he speak of fellowship with God in this life only, or does he pierce the veil, and realise not only the possibility but the certainty of a continued life of conscious fellowship with God hereafter, and even of the resurrection of the body?

It is difficult to divest the words of the associations which have gathered round them, and impartially to weigh their original meaning. On the one hand, however, it is unquestionable that similar language is used elsewhere of deliverance from temporal death, and enjoyment of fellowship with God in this life: while in other psalms we find the gloomiest anticipations of death, and the dreariest pictures of the state of the departed. On the other hand it is clear that the words *admit* of reference to an unending life of fellowship with God.

The truth may be (as will be seen more clearly in Ps. xvii) that the antithesis is not between life here and life hereafter, but between life with and life without God; and for the moment, in the overpowering sense of the blessedness of fellowship with God, death fades entirely from the Psalmist's view.

The doctrine of a future life is however involved in the Psalmist's faith. He grounds his hope of deliverance on his relation to Jehovah; and such a relation could not be interrupted by death (Matt. xxii. 32). But this truth could only be apprehended gradually and through long struggles, and only fully realised when Christ "annulled death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the Gospel." (2 Tim. i. 10.)

For ourselves the words must bear the fuller meaning with which Christ's resurrection has illuminated them. To us they must speak of that 'eternal life' which is begun here, and is to be consummated hereafter (John vi. 47, 54; xiv. 19).

PSALM XVII.

The Psalmist and his companions (*v.* 11) are beset by proud and pitiless enemies, bent upon their destruction. One among them is conspicuous for the virulence of his hostility (*v.* 12). Such an occasion in David's life is described in 1 Sam. xxiii. 25 ff., when "Saul pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon...and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them." The thoughts and language of the Psalm

find parallels in Davidic Psalms, especially vii and xi. Many critics however refer this Psalm as well as xvi to a much later period. Ewald places them in the Exile.

The links of connexion between this Psalm and Ps. xvi should be studied. Compare xvii. 3 with xvi. 7; xvii. 5 with xvi. 11, 8; xvii. 6 with xvi. 1 (*God*=El); xvii. 7 with xvi. 1, 10 (one who has taken refuge in Jehovah naturally appeals to the Saviour of those that take refuge in Him; Jehovah's beloved one (*chasid*) naturally pleads for the manifestation of His *chesed* or lovingkindness); xvii. 14 with xvi. 5 (the contrast between the portion of the worldly and that of the Psalmist). The ground of appeal in xvii is that integrity of devotion which inspires xvi; in both Psalms communion with Jehovah is set forth as the highest joy; xvii. 15 recalls xvi. 9—11. Cp. 'I shall be satisfied' (xvii. 15) with 'satisfying fulness' (xvi. 11). But the tone of the two Psalms presents a striking contrast, and points to the difference in the Psalmist's circumstances. In xvi danger is in the background: the Psalm breathes a spirit of calm repose and joyous serenity. In xvii danger is pressing, and help is urgently needed. The faith of calmer days is being put to the proof.

The Psalm may be divided thus:

i. Appeal to Jehovah for justice on the ground of the petitioner's integrity (1—5).

ii. Prayer for protection on the ground of Jehovah's relation to him, enforced by a description of the virulence of his enemies (6—12).

iii. Reiterated prayer for Jehovah's help, and contrast between the contentment of these men with their material blessings and his own longing for the closest communion with God (13—15).

A prayer of David is a fitting title for this Psalm. Cp. *v.* 1, and Introd. p. xv.

A Prayer of David.

Hear the right, O Lord, attend unto my cry, 17
Give ear unto my prayer, *that goeth* not out of feigned lips.
Let my sentence come forth from thy presence;

1, 2. An appeal for justice.

1. *the right*] Lit. *righteousness* or *justice*. With a righteous cause and a just appeal (vii. 8) the Psalmist appears before the righteous Judge (vii. 17; ix. 4, 8), confident in the integrity of his motives towards God and man. A good conscience is the indispensable condition of earnest prayer.

my cry] The word denotes a shrill piercing cry, frequently of joy, sometimes as here of entreaty, "expressive of emotional excitement such as an Eastern scruples not to use in prayer" (Cheyne). Cp. lxi. 1; Jer. vii. 16.

that goeth *not out of feigned lips*] Uttered *by no deceitful lips*. Cp. v. 6; x. 7. There is no hypocrisy in this prayer.

2. The petition. *Let* my judgement *come forth from thy presence*

Let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.
3 Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited *me* in the night;
Thou hast tried me, *and* shalt find nothing;
I am purposed *that* my mouth shall not transgress.
4 Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips
I have kept *me from* the paths of the destroyer.
5 Hold up my goings in thy paths,
That my footsteps slip not.

Cp. xxxvii. 6; Is. xlii. 1, 3, 4; Hab. i. 4. Pronounce sentence for me; publish it; give effect to it, and vindicate the justice of my cause.

Let thine eyes &c.] Better, **Thine eyes behold equity**, or, **with equity**. The prayer is based on the known character of Jehovah. His discernment is complete and impartial. Cp. xi. 4; ix. 8.

3—5. The bold language of a good conscience. See Introd. p. lxxxvii. Cp. Acts xxiii. 1; xxiv. 16.

3. *Thou hast* **tried** *mine heart* (vii. 9; xi. 4, 5); *thou hast visited me in the night*, when men's thoughts range unrestrainedly, and they appear in their true colours (xxxvi. 4); *thou hast* **proved** or refined me (lxvi. 10), *and* **findest** *nothing*, no dross of evil purpose. But see next note.

I am purposed &c.] A difficult and much disputed clause. The A.V., retained in R.V. text, follows the Massoretic accents. It is however better to connect this and the preceding clause thus:

Thou hast proved me, and findest no evil purpose in me;
My mouth doth not transgress.

In thought, word, and deed (*v.* 4), he has nothing to fear from the Divine scrutiny.

4. As for the works of men, by the word of thy lips
I have shunned the paths of the violent.

In regard to his behaviour as a man among men, he has obeyed the Divine precepts, and marked and shunned the ways of violent men, avoiding their example and society. God's commandments have been his preservation, supplying the rule and the strength for his conduct. 'The paths of the violent' are the opposite of the 'path of life,' xvi. 11. (Prov. i. 19; ii. 11—19, &c.). Robbery with violence is mentioned as the commonest form of wrong-doing to neighbours (Jer. vii. 11; Ezek. xviii. 10). For illustration of the verse from David's life see 1 Sam. xxv. 32 ff.; xxiv. 10 ff.; cp. Ps. vii. 3 ff.

The P.B.V., *Because of men's works, that are done against the words of thy lips*, is untenable.

5. My steps have held fast to thy tracks,
My feet have not slipped.

The A.V. is grammatically untenable. He describes his conduct positively. *Paths*, a different word from that in *v.* 4 denotes the

I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: 6
Incline thine ear unto me, *and* hear my speech.
Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by 7
thy right hand them which put their trust *in thee*
From those that rise up *against them.*
Keep me as the apple of the eye, 8
Hide me under the shadow of thy wings,
From the wicked that oppress me, 9
From my deadly enemies, *who* compass me about.

beaten tracks made by wheeled vehicles. *Slipped* (the same word as *moved* in xv. 5, xvi. 8), of moral 'slips' and 'falls.'

6—9. After protesting his integrity he resumes his prayer.

6. *I have called upon thee*] I is emphatic. Being such an one as I am, I have called upon Thee, in full confidence that Thou wilt answer me.

O God] *El*, as in xvi. 1. See note on v. 4.

hear] Wrongly printed in italics in many editions.

7. *Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness*] Lit., *Make marvellous thy lovingkindnesses*: Vulg. *mirifica misericordias tuas.* Cp. xxxi. 21, and note on ix. 1. The word implies a signal intervention on his behalf. The need is great, but God's power is greater.

Parallel passages decide in favour of connecting *O thou that savest by thy right hand* (lx. 5; xx. 6). R.V. follows the original in transferring *by thy right hand* to the end of the verse for emphasis. But the balanced brevity of the Hebrew (the whole verse contains but six words) defies translation. For *put their trust*, cp. xvi. 1; for *those that rise up against thee*, cp. lix. 1, xvii. 48. Grammatically possible, but unsupported by analogy, is the rendering of R.V. marg., *from those that rise up against thy right hand*; cp. P.B.V., *from such as resist thy right hand*, which follows the LXX, Vulg., and Jer. (*a resistentibus dexterae tuae*).

8. *Keep me* &c.] Or, Preserve me (the same word as in xvi. 1) *as the apple* or *pupil of the eye*, an emblem of that which is tenderest and dearest, and therefore guarded with the most jealous care. Cp. Deut. xxxii. 10; Prov. vii. 2; Zech. ii. 8.

Hide me &c.] A favourite figure, taken from the care of the mother-bird for her young, not however specially from the hen (Matt. xxiii. 37), for there is no trace in the O. T. of the practice of keeping domestic fowls. Cp. xxxvi. 7; lvii. 1; lxi. 4; lxiii. 7; xci. 4. As the first half of the verse may refer to Deut. xxxii. 10, the figure may have been suggested by the reference to the eagle in *v.* 11; but the figure there is quite different. God's leading of His people is compared with the eagle teaching its young to fly.

9. *that oppress me*] R.V., that spoil me. Cp. xii. 5. (R.V.).

my deadly enemies] Nothing but his life will satisfy them. Cp. 1 Sam. xxiv. 11. This is the sense, whether the exact meaning is *enemies*

10 They are inclosed *in* their own fat:
With their mouth they speak proudly.
11 They have now compassed us *in* our steps:
They have set their eyes bowing down to the earth;
12 Like as a lion *that* is greedy of his prey,
And as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.
13 Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down:
Deliver my soul from the wicked, *which is* thy sword:
14 From men *which are* thy hand, O LORD,
From men of the world, *which have* their portion in *this* life,

in soul, i.e. with murderous intent (xxvii. 12; xli. 2), or *enemies against* (my) *soul*.

10—12. The character of his enemies.

10. Prosperity has resulted in obtuse self-complacency and contemptuous arrogance. Cp. lxxiii. 7, 8; Job xv. 27. The right rendering of 10*a* is however probably (cp. R.V. marg.) **Their heart** (lit. *midriff*) **have they shut up.** They have closed it against every influence for good and all sympathy. Cp. 1 John iii. 17. See for this explanation Prof. Robertson Smith's *Religion of the Semites*, p. 360.

they speak proudly] Cp. xii. 3 ff.; x. 2; xxxi. 18; lxxiii. 6.

11. It has come to this that they beset the Psalmist and his adherents at every step. See 1 Sam. xxiii. 26.

They have set &c.] R.V., **They set their eyes to cast us down to the earth.** They watch intently for an opportunity of overthrowing us. Cp. xxxvii. 32, 14; x. 8.

12. *Like as a lion* &c.] Lit., **He is like a lion that is greedy to raven.** (xxii. 13). One of the pursuers (Saul, if the singer is David) is conspicuous for ferocity and craftiness. Cp. vii. 2; x. 8, 9.

13. *Arise, O LORD* (iii. 7), **confront him**, meet him face to face as he prepares to spring (or, as R.V. marg., *forestall him*), **make him bow down**, crouching in abject submission (xviii. 39). The same word is used of the lion in repose, Gen. xlix. 9; Num. xxiv. 9.

13, 14. *from the wicked*, which is *thy sword: from men* which are *thy hand*] This rendering, which is in part that of Jerome, is retained in R.V. marg. For the thought that God uses even the wicked as His instruments see Is. x. 5, where the Assyrian is called the rod of Jehovah's anger. But R.V. text is preferable: **from the wicked by thy sword; from men, by thy hand.** Cp. vii. 12.

14. *from men of the world*] Men whose aims and pleasures belong to the 'world that passeth away': those who in N.T. language are 'of the world' (John xv. 19), 'sons of this age' (Luke xvi. 8; xx. 34, 35), 'who mind earthly things' (Phil. iii. 19). They are further described as those **whose portion is in** [this] **life.** Jehovah Himself is the portion of the godly (xvi. 5); these men are content with a portion of material and transitory things. See xlix. 6 ff.; lxxiii. 3 ff.; Wisdom ii. 6 ff.

And whose belly thou fillest *with* thy hid *treasure*:
They are full *of* children,
And leave the rest of their *substance* to their babes.
As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: 15
I shall be satisfied, when *I* awake, *with* thy likeness.

The sense is still better given by the rendering of R.V. marg., **From men whose portion in life is of the world**. God deals with them according to their own base desires. They care only for the satisfaction of their lower appetites (Phil. iii. 19), and so He "who maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good" fills their belly with His store of blessings, gratifies the animal part of their nature (Job xxii. 18; Luke xvi. 25).

They are full of *children*] Better, **They are satisfied with sons**, the universal desire of men in Oriental countries being to see a family perpetuating their name (Job xxi. 8, 11); **and leave their superabundance to their children**; their prosperity continues through life, they have enough for themselves and to spare for their families.

15. **As for me, in righteousness let me behold thy face:**
Let me be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

With the low desires of worldly men the Psalmist contrasts his own spiritual aspirations. He does not complain of their prosperity; it does not present itself to him as a trial of patience and a moral enigma, as it does to the authors of Pss. xxxvii and lxxiii. Their blessings are not for an instant to be compared with his. 'To behold Jehovah's face' is to enjoy communion with Him and all the blessings that flow from it; it is the inward reality which corresponds to 'appearing before Him' in the sanctuary. Cp. xvi. 11. 'Righteousness' is the condition of that 'beholding'; for it is sin that separates from God. Cp. xi. 7 note; xv. 1 ff.; Matt. v. 8; Heb. xii. 14.

He concludes with a yet bolder prayer, that he may be admitted to that highest degree of privilege which Moses enjoyed, and *be satisfied* with *the likeness* or *form of Jehovah*. See Num. xii. 6—8. Worldly men are satisfied if they see themselves reflected in their sons: nothing less than the sight of the form of God will satisfy the Psalmist. Cp. xvi. 11. See Driver on Deut. iv. 12.

But what is meant by *when I awake*? Not 'when the night of calamity is at an end'; a sense which the word will not bear. What he desires is (1) the *daily* renewal of this communion (cp. cxxxix. 18; Prov. vi. 22); and (2) as the passage in Numbers suggests, a *waking sight* of God, as distinguished from a dream or vision.

The words are commonly explained of awaking from the sleep of death to behold the face of God in the world beyond, and to be transfigured into His likeness. Death is no doubt spoken of as sleep (xiii. 3), and resurrection as awakening (Is. xxvi. 19; Dan. xii. 2). But elsewhere the context makes the meaning unambiguous. Here, however, this reference is excluded by the context. The Psalmist does not anticipate death, but prays to be delivered from it (*vv.* 8 ff.). The contrast present to his mind is not between 'this world' and 'another

world,' the 'present life' and the 'future life,' but between the false life and the true life in this present world, between 'the flesh' and 'the spirit,' between the 'natural man' with his sensuous desires, and the 'spiritual man' with his Godward desires. Here, as in xvi. 9—11, death fades from the Psalmist's view. He is absorbed with the thought of the blessedness of fellowship with God[1].

But the doctrine of life eternal is implicitly contained in the words. For it is inconceivable that communion with God thus begun and daily renewed should be abruptly terminated by death. It is possible that the Psalmist and those for whom he sung may have had some glimmering of this larger hope, though how or when it was to be realised was not yet revealed. But whether they drew the inference must remain doubtful. In the economy of revelation "heaven is first a temper and then a place."

It is indeed impossible for us to read the words now without thinking of their 'fulfilment' in the light of the Gospel: of the more profound revelation of righteousness (Rom. i. 17); of the sight of the Father in the Incarnate Son (John xiv. 9); of the hope of transfiguration into His likeness here and hereafter, and of the Beatific Vision (2 Cor. iii. 18; Phil. iii. 21; 1 John iii. 2; Rev. xxii. 4).

It may be remarked that none of the ancient versions render as though they definitely referred the passage to the Resurrection. Targ., Aq., Symm., Jer., all give a literal version. The LXX, *I shall be satisfied when Thy glory appears:* Syr., *when Thy faithfulness appears:* Theod., *when Thy right hand appears:* seem to have had a different text. *Thy glory* is substituted for *thy form* in LXX as in Num. xii. 18.

PSALM XVIII.

At length the warrior-king was at peace. The hairbreadth escapes of his flight from Saul, when his life was in hourly peril and he knew not whither to turn for safety; the miseries and bitterness of civil strife, through which though chosen by Jehovah to rule His people he had to fight his way to the throne; the wars with surrounding nations, which, jealous of Israel's rising power, had leagued together to crush the scarcely consolidated kingdom;—all were past and over. David had been preserved through every danger; victory had accompanied his arms; he was the accepted king of an united people; the nations around acknowledged his supremacy. To crown all, Jehovah's message communicated by Nathan had opened out the prospect of a splendid future for his posterity.

In this hour of his highest prosperity and happiness David composed this magnificent hymn of thanksgiving. He surveys the course of an

[1] Comp. Delitzsch: "The contrast is not so much here and hereafter, as world (life) and God. We see here into the inmost nature of the O.T. belief. All the blessedness and glory of the future life which the N.T. unfolds is for the O.T. faith contained in Jehovah. Jehovah is its highest good; in the possession of Him it is raised above heaven and earth, life and death; to surrender itself blindly to Him, without any explicit knowledge of a future life of blessedness, to be satisfied with Him, to rest in Him, to take refuge in Him in view of death, is characteristic of the O.T. faith." *The Psalms*, p. 161.

eventful life; he traces the hand of Jehovah in every step; and his heart overflows with joyous gratitude. The inspiring thought of the whole Psalm is that Jehovah has made him what he is. To His loving care and unfailing faithfulness he owes it that he has been preserved and guided and raised to his present height of power.

By expressive metaphors he describes what Jehovah had proved Himself to be to him (1—3); and then depicting in forcible figures the extremity of peril to which he had been brought (4—6), he tells how in answer to his prayer Jehovah manifested His power (7—15), and delivered him from the enemies who were too strong for him (16—19). In strong and simple consciousness of his own integrity (20—23), he delights to trace in this deliverance a proof of Jehovah's faithfulness to those who are faithful to Him, in accordance with the general law of His dealings (24—27). To Him alone he owes all that he is (28—30); He, the unique and incomparable God, has given him strength and skill for war (31—34); He it is who has made him victorious over his enemies (35—42); He it is who has made him king over his people and supreme among surrounding nations (43—45). It is Jehovah alone; and His praise shall be celebrated throughout the world. Nor is His lovingkindness limited to David only; the promise reaches forward, and embraces his posterity for evermore (46—50).

That David was the author of this Psalm is generally admitted, except by critics who question the existence of Davidic Psalms at all. Not only does it stand in the Psalter as David's, but the compiler of 2 Samuel embodied it in his work as at once the best illustration of David's life and character, and the noblest specimen of his poetry.

The internal evidence of its contents corroborates the external tradition. The Psalmist is a distinguished and successful warrior, general, and king (*vv.* 29, 33, 34, 37 ff., 43): he has had to contend with domestic as well as foreign enemies (43 ff.), and has received the submission of surrounding nations (44). He looks back upon a life of extraordinary trials and dangers to which he has been exposed from enemies among whom one was conspicuous for his ferocity (4 ff., 17, 48). He appeals to his own integrity of purpose, and sees in his deliverance God's recognition of that integrity (20 ff.); yet throughout he shews a singular humility and the clearest sense that he owes to Jehovah's grace whatever he has or is. These characteristics, taken together, point to David, and to no one else of whom we have any knowledge: and the intense personality and directness of the Psalm are a strong argument against the hypothesis that it is a composition put into his mouth by some later poet.

At what period of David's life the Psalm was written has been much debated. But title and contents both point unmistakably to the middle period of his reign, when he was in the zenith of his prosperity and power, rather than to the close of his life. His triumphs over his enemies at home and abroad are still recent; the perils of his flight from Saul are still fresh in his memory. On the other hand there is not a trace of the sins and sorrows which clouded the later years of his reign. The free and joyous tone of the Psalm, and its bold assertions of integrity, point to a time before his sin with Bath-sheba, and

Absalom's rebellion. The composition of the Psalm may therefore most naturally and fitly be assigned to the interval of peace mentioned in 2 Sam. vii. 1, which may (see notes there) have been subsequent to some at least of the wars described in ch. viii, for the arrangement of the book does not appear to be strictly chronological. But it must be placed after the visit of Nathan recorded in 2 Sam. vii, as *v.* 50 clearly refers to the promise then given: unless indeed *v.* 50 is to be regarded as a later addition to the Psalm. In that time of tranquillity David reviewed the mercies of Jehovah in this sublime ode of thanksgiving, and planned to raise a monument of his gratitude in the scheme for building the Temple, which he was not allowed to carry out.

The title of the Psalm is composite. The first part of it, *For the Chief Musician*. A Psalm *of David the servant of the* LORD, is analogous to the titles of other psalms in this collection: the second part is taken from 2 Sam. xxii. 1, or from the older history which the compiler of Samuel made use of.

Comp. the similar titles in Ex. xv. 1; Deut. xxxi. 30.

Here, as in the title of Ps. xxxvi, David is styled *Jehovah's servant*. Cp. 2 Sam. iii. 18; vii. 5, 8; 1 Kings viii. 24; Ps. lxxviii. 70; lxxxix. 3, 20; cxxxii. 10. Any Israelite might profess himself Jehovah's servant in addressing Him, but only a few who were raised up to do special service or who stood in a special relation to Jehovah, such as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Job, are honoured with this distinctive title.

Saul is mentioned by name as the most bitter and implacable of David's enemies. (For the form of expression cp. Ex. xviii. 10.) David's preservation in that fierce persecution which was aimed at his very life was the most signal instance of the providence which had watched over him. Much of the language of this Psalm reflects the experience of that time of anxiety and peril.

The Two Recensions of Psalm xviii.

The existence of this Psalm in two forms or recensions, in the Psalter and in 2 Sam., is a fact of the highest interest and importance in its bearing on the history and character of the Massoretic text of the O. T. Two questions obviously arise: (1) how are the variations to be accounted for? and (2) which text is to be preferred as on the whole nearest to the original?

Defenders of the integrity of the Massoretic text have maintained that both recensions proceeded from the poet himself, and are both equally authentic. That in Samuel is supposed to be the original form; that in the Psalter is supposed to be a revision prepared by David himself, probably towards the close of his life, for public use. This hypothesis can neither be proved nor disproved, but few will now maintain it. It is certain that many of the variations are due to errors of transcription (see on *vv.* 4, 10, 41, 42, 50); and the great probability is that those which appear to be due to intentional alteration were the work of a later reviser (see on *vv.* 11, 32, 45).

Critics differ widely as to the relative value of the two texts. Both texts have unquestionably been affected by errors of transcription, and the text in 2 Sam. has suffered most from this cause, less care having

been bestowed on the preservation of the historical books. On the other hand the text in the Psalter appears to the present editor to have been subjected to a literary revision at a later date, in which peculiar forms, which were possibly "licences of popular usage" have been replaced by the forms in ordinary use; unusual constructions simplified; archaisms and obscure expressions explained. If this view is correct, the text in Samuel best preserves the original features of the poem, while at the same time it frequently needs correction from the text in the Psalter.

To the chief Musician. *A Psalm* of David the servant of the LORD, who spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day *that* the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: And he said,

I will love thee, O LORD, my strength. 18
The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; 2
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;
My buckler, and the horn of my salvation, *and* my high tower.

1—3. Introductory prelude, in which one title is heaped upon another to express all that experience had proved Jehovah to be to David.

1. *I will love thee*] Fervently do I love thee, a word occurring nowhere else in this form, and denoting tender and intimate affection. This verse is omitted in 2 Sam.

2. The imagery which David uses is derived from the features of a country abounding in cliffs and caves and natural strongholds, with which he had become familiar in his flight from Saul. *The rock*, or cliff (*sela*) where he had been so unexpectedly delivered from Saul (1 Sam. xxiii. 25—28): *the fortress* or stronghold in the wilderness of Judah or the fastnesses of En-gedi (1 Sam. xxii. 4, xxiii. 14, 19, 29, xxiv. 22); "the rocks of the wild goats" (1 Sam. xxiv. 2; 1 Chr. xi. 15); were all emblems of Him who had been throughout his true Refuge and Deliverer.

my God] *El*, and so in *vv.* 30, 32, 47. See note on v. 4.

my strength &c.] Lit., my rock in whom I take refuge. Here first in the Psalter occurs the title Rock (*tsūr*), so often used to describe the strength, faithfulness, and unchangeableness of Jehovah. See *vv.* 31, 46; Deut. xxxii. 4, 15, 18, 30, 31; 1 Sam. ii. 2; Ps. xix. 14; xxviii. 1; &c. Here, as the relative clause shews, the special idea is that of an asylum in danger. Cp. xciv. 22; Deut. xxxii. 37.

my buckler &c.] As my shield He defends me: as *the horn of my salvation* He drives my enemies before Him and gives me the victory. The horn is a common symbol of irresistible strength, derived from horned animals, especially wild oxen. See Deut. xxxiii. 17; and note the use of the phrase in Lk. i. 69. Cp. Ps. xxviii. 7, 8.

my high tower] See note on ix. 9. 2 Sam. adds, "and my refuge, my saviour, who savest me from violence."

3 I will call upon the LORD, who is *worthy* to be praised:
So shall I be saved from mine enemies.
4 The sorrows of death compassed me,
And the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.
5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about:
The snares of death prevented me.

3. Not merely a resolution or expression of confidence for the future (*I will call...so shall I be saved*); but the expression of a general conviction of God's faithfulness to answer prayer; **whensoever I call .. then am I saved** &c. Cp. lvi. 9. This conviction is based on experience, and illustrated by what follows (*v.* 6).

worthy *to be praised*] Cp. xlviii. 1. xcvi. 4. cxiii. 3. cxlv. 3. Jehovah is the one object of Israel's praise (Deut. x. 21), and on Israel's praises He sits enthroned (Ps. xxii. 3). The keynote of worship is *Hallelujah*, 'praise ye Jah,' and the Hebrew title of the Psalter is *Tehillim*, **i. e.** *Praises*.

4 6. In forcible figures David pictures the extremity of need in which he cried for help, and not in vain. Again and again there had been 'but a step between him and death.' (1 Sam. xx. 3.) The perils to which he had been exposed are described as waves and torrents which threatened to engulf him or sweep him away: Sheol and Death are represented as hunters laying wait for his life with nets and snares.

4. *The sorrows of death*] Rather, as R.V., **The cords of death.** But the word has been wrongly introduced here from *v.* 5, and the true reading should be restored from 2 Sam.: **the waves** (lit. *breakers*) **of death.** This gives a proper parallelism to *floods* in the next line. But the reading *cords* must be very ancient, for Ps. cxvi. 3 appears to recognise it.

floods of ungodly men] More graphically the original, **torrents of destruction**, or, **ungodliness.** Destruction threatened him like a torrent swollen by a sudden storm, and sweeping all before it (Jud. v. 21). The Heb. word *belial*, lit. *worthlessness*, may mean *destruction*, physical mischief, as well as *wickedness*, moral mischief: and the context points rather to the former sense here. Death, Destruction, and Sheol, are indeed almost personified, as conspiring for his ruin.

5. Render with R.V.,

The cords of Sheol were round about me:
The snares of death came upon me.

The Heb. word rendered *sorrows* in the A.V. may no doubt have the meaning *pangs*, and is so rendered by the LXX (ὠδῖνες θανάτου... ὠ. ᾅδου, cp. Acts ii. 24). But the parallelism decides in favour of the rendering *cords*. Death and Sheol, the mysterious unseen world (see on vi. 5), are like hunters lying in wait for their prey with nooses and nets.

prevented] i.e. came before, confronted me (xvii. 13) with hostile intention. See note on *v.* 18.

In my distress I called upon the LORD,
And cried unto my God:
He heard my voice out of his temple,
And my cry came before him, *even* into his ears.
Then the earth shook and trembled;
The foundations also of the hills moved

6. *called...cried*] The tense in the original denotes *frequent* and *repeated* prayer. The text of 2 Sam. has *called* twice, no doubt by an error of transcription.

out of his temple] The palace temple of heaven, where He sits enthroned. See on xi. 4. Cp. *v.* 16.

and my cry &c.] R.V., and my cry before him came into his ears. But the terse vigour of the text in 2 Sam. is preferable: "and my cry was in his ears." An alternative reading or an explanatory gloss has crept into the text here, to the detriment of the rhythm.

7—15. Forthwith David's prayer is answered by the Advent of Jehovah for the discomfiture of his enemies. He manifests Himself in earthquake and storm. The majestic though terrible phenomena of nature are the expression of His presence. Nature in its stern and awful aspect is a revelation of His judicial wrath. We may call this an 'ideal' description of a Theophany; for though it is possible that David refers to some occasion when his enemies were scattered by the breaking of a terrible storm (cp. Josh. x. 11; Jud. v. 20 f.; 1 Sam. vii. 10), we have no record of such an event having actually happened in his life; and in any case the picture is intended to serve as a description of God's providential interposition for his deliverance in general, and not upon any single occasion. His power was exerted as really and truly as if all these extraordinary natural phenomena had visibly attested His Advent. Compare the accounts of the Exodus and the Giving of the Law. See Ex. xix. 16—18; Jud. v. 4. 5; Ps. lxviii. 7, 8, lxxvii. 16—18: and cp. l. 2 ff., xcvii. 2 ff., cxiv; Is. xxix. 6, xxx. 27 ff., lxiv. 1 ff; Hab. iii. 3 ff.

Ps. xxix should be compared as illustrating David's sense of the grandeur and significance of natural phenomena.

The earthquake (*v.* 7); the distant lightnings (*v.* 8); the gathering darkness of the storm (*vv.* 9—11); the final outburst of its full fury (*vv.* 12—15); are pictured in regular succession.

7. The paronomasia of the original in the first line might be preserved by rendering, Then the earth did shake and quake.

the foundations &c.] Render: And the foundations of the mountains trembled. The strong mountains were shaken to their very bases. Cp. Is. xxiv. 18; Hab. iii. 6. The text in 2 Sam. has "the foundations of heaven;" heaven as well as earth trembled. Its 'foundations' may be the mountains on which the vault of heaven seems to rest: cp. "the pillars of heaven" (Job xxvi. 11): or more probably the universe is spoken of as a vast building, without any idea of applying the details of the metaphor precisely.

And were shaken, because he was wroth.
8 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils,
And fire out of his mouth devoured:
Coals were kindled by it.
9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down:
And darkness *was* under his feet.
10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly:

because he was wroth] The coming of Jehovah for the deliverance of His servant is necessarily a coming for the judgment of His enemies; and 'wrath' is that attribute of God's character which moves Him to judgment. Cp. Rev. vi. 16, 17.

8. The startling boldness of the language will be intelligible if the distinctive character of Hebrew symbolism is borne in mind. It is no "gross anthropomorphism," for the poet did not intend that the mind's eye should shape his figures into a concrete form. His aim is vividly to express the awfulness of this manifestation of God's wrath, and he does it by using figures which are intended to remain as purely mental conceptions, not to be realised as though God appeared in any visible shape. See some excellent remarks in Archbishop Trench's *Comm. on the Epistles to the Seven Churches*, p. 43.

a smoke] The outward sign of the pent-up fires of wrath. So anger is said *to smoke* (Ps. lxxiv. 1; lxxx. 4 *marg.*). This bold figure is suggested by the panting and snorting of an infuriated animal. See the description of the crocodile in Job xli. 19—21.

out of his nostrils] Cp. *v.* 15. *In his wrath* (R.V. marg.) is a possible rendering, but the context and parallelism are against it.

fire] The constant emblem of the consuming wrath of God. See Ex. xv. 7; Deut. xxxii. 22; Ps. xcvii. 3; Heb. xii. 29.

coals &c.] Or, hot burning coals came out of it: the fiery messengers of vengeance (cxl. 10).

9. The dark canopy of storm clouds, which is the pavement under His feet (Nah. i. 3), lowers as He descends to judgment. God is said to *come down* when He manifests His power in the world (Gen. xi. 7, xviii. 21; Is. lxiv. 1). The *darkness*, or better as R.V., thick darkness, in which He conceals Himself from human view, symbolises the mystery and awfulness of His Advent (Ex. xix. 16; xx. 21: 1 Kings viii. 12; Ps. xcvii. 2).

10. As the Shechinah, or mystic Presence of Jehovah in the cloud of glory, rested over the cherubim which were upon the "Mercy-seat" or covering of the ark (2 Sam. vi. 2; Ps. lxxx. 1; Heb. ix. 5), so here Jehovah is represented "riding upon a cherub," as the living throne on which He traverses space.

The Cherubim appear in Scripture (*a*) as the guardians of Paradise (Gen. iii. 24): (*b*) as sculptured or wrought figures in the Tabernacle and Temple (Ex. xxv. 17—22, xxvi. 1; 1 Kings vi. 23 ff.; vii. 29, 36): (*c*) in prophetic visions as the attendants of God (Ezek. x. 1 ff.; cp. Ezek. i; Is. vi; Rev. iv). The Cherubim of the Tabernacle and Temple

Yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.
He made darkness his secret place;
His pavilion round about him
Were dark waters *and* thick clouds of the skies.
At the brightness *that was* before him his thick clouds passed,
Hail-*stones* and coals of fire.
The LORD also thundered in the heavens,
And the Highest gave his voice;
Hail-*stones* and coals of fire.
Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them;

seem to have been winged human figures, representing the angelic attendants who minister in God's Presence: those of Ezekiel's vision appear as composite figures (Ez. x. 20, 21), symbolical perhaps of all the powers of nature, which wait upon God and fulfil His Will.

yea, he did fly] R.V. yea, he flew swiftly. The Heb. word is a peculiar one, used of the *swooping* of birds of prey (Deut. xxviii. 49; Jer. xlviii. 40, xlix. 22). The reading "yea, he was seen" in 2 Sam. is an obvious corruption. The consonants of the two words are so nearly alike (וירא—ויעף), that the rarer word would easily be altered into the more common one. For "the wings of the wind" cp. civ. 3.

11. R.V. **He made darkness his hiding-place, his pavilion round about him;**
Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.

The darkness of the rain-charged storm-cloud is the tent in which Jehovah shrouds His Majesty. Cp. Job xxxvi. 29; Ps. xcvii. 2. The rhythm gains by the omission of *his hiding-place*, as in 2 Sam.; and the text there may be right in reading *gathering of waters* for *darkness of waters*.

12. The best rendering of this obscure verse seems to be:
From the brightness before him there passed through his thick clouds hailstones and coals of fire.

The flashes of lightning, accompanied by hail (Ex. ix. 23, 24), are as it were rays of the "unapproachable light" in which He dwells, piercing through the dense clouds which conceal Him. The text in 2 Sam. which has only, "at the brightness before him coals of fire were kindled," is evidently mutilated.

13. *and the Highest* &c.] R.V., **and the Most High uttered his voice.** *The Most High* is the title of God as the Supreme Ruler of the Universe. See vii. 17; and Appendix, Note II. Thunder is the voice of God. See xxix. 3; Job xxxvii. 2—5. The words *hail-stones and coals of fire* have no proper grammatical construction, and are wanting in the LXX and in 2 Sam. They seem to have been added here from *v.* 12 by an error of transcription.

14. **And he sent out** &c. (R.V.) gives the connexion better than *Yea*. Lightnings are Jehovah's arrows. Cp. lxxvii. 17; Hab. iii. 11.

Scattered them clearly refers to the enemies whose destruction was the object of this Divine interposition (*v.* 3).

And he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.
15 Then the channels of waters were seen,
And the foundations of the world were discovered
At thy rebuke, O LORD,
At the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.
16 He sent from above, he took me,
He drew me out of many waters.
17 He delivered me from my strong enemy,
And from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.
18 They prevented me in the day of my calamity:

and he shot out lightnings] Better, yea, lightnings in abundance; or, as R.V., lightnings manifold.

discomfited] A word denoting the confusion of a sudden panic, and used especially of supernatural defeat. Cp. Ex. xiv. 24 (R.V.); Josh. x. 10; Jud. iv. 15; 1 Sam. vii. 10. Ps. cxliv. 6, 7 is based on *vv.* 14, 16.

15. The waters of the sea retreat, its bed is seen, and the hidden bases of the world are laid bare, owning their Lord and Master, as of old at the Exodus when "He rebuked the Red Sea, and it was dried up." See Ex. xv. 8; Ps. cvi. 9; Nah. i. 4. Cp. too Matt. viii. 26. *Channels of* the sea (2 Sam.) is the preferable reading.

were discovered] i.e. as R.V., were laid bare, the original meaning of the word *discover*, which it generally retains in the A.V. Cp. xxix. 9.

at the blast &c.] Cp. *v.* 8.

16—19. The deliverance which was the object of Jehovah's manifestation of His power.

16. *He sent from above*] R.V., He sent from on high: but it seems better to render, He reached forth from on high, as the writer of Ps. cxliv. 7 understood the words. He stretched out His hand and caught hold of the sinking man, and drew him out of the floods of calamity which were overwhelming him (*v.* 4).

drew me] The word is found elsewhere only in Ex. ii. 10, to which there may be an allusion. 'He drew me out of the great waters of distress, as He drew Moses out of the waters of the Nile, to be the deliverer of His people.' For *many* or *great waters* as an emblem of danger, cp. xxxii. 6, lxvi. 12, lxix. 2, 3.

17. Figures are dropped, and David refers explicitly to his deliverance from his 'strong' or 'fierce' enemy Saul, and Saul's partisans who hated him, from whom but for this Divine intervention he could not have escaped, for they were too mighty for him.

18. *They prevented me*] They came upon me (R.V.), or, encountered me. *Prevent* is used in a sense which illustrates the transition from its original meaning *to go before* to its modern meaning *to hinder*. Cp. Milton's *Paradise Lost*, VI. 129:

But the LORD was my stay.
He brought me forth also into a large place; 19
He delivered me, because he delighted in me.
The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; 20
According to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.
For I have kept the ways of the LORD, 21
And have not wickedly departed from my God.
For all his judgments *were* before me, 22
And I did not put away his statutes from me.

Half way he met
His daring foe, at this prevention more
Incens'd.

See Mr Aldis Wright's *Bible Word-Book*.

my stay] My staff (xxiii. 4) and support. Cp. Is. x. 20.

19. From the straits of peril he is brought forth into the freedom of safety. Cp. iv. 1, xxxi. 8.

because he delighted in me] This was the ground of God's deliverance, and it now becomes the leading thought of the Psalm. Cp. xxii. 8, xli. 11; 2 Sam. xv. 26; and also Matt. iii. 17. The latter reference gains fresh significance if it is remembered that the theocratic king was called Jehovah's son (ii. 7; 2 Sam. vii. 14).

20—23. The language is inspired by the courage of a childlike simplicity. It is no vainglorious boasting of his own merits, but a testimony to the faithfulness of Jehovah to guard and reward His faithful servants. David does not lay claim to a sinless righteousness, but to single-hearted sincerity in his devotion to God. Compare his own testimony (1 Sam. xxvi. 23), God's testimony (1 Kings xiv. 8), and the testimony of history (1 Kings xi. 4, xv. 5), to his essential integrity. Cp. vii. 8, xvii. 3, 4; and see Introd. p. lxxxvii f.

Is not this conscious rectitude, this "princely heart of innocence," a clear indication that the Psalm was written before his great fall?

20. *rewarded me*] Or, dealt with me, for the primary idea of the word is not that of recompence, although this lies in the context. Cp. xiii. 6.

the cleanness of my hands] = the innocence of my conduct. Cp. xxiv. 4, xxvi. 6.

21. He goes on to substantiate the assertion of the preceding verse. Cp. the prayer of v. 8. Sin is in its nature a separation from God. Cp. Heb. iii. 12.

22. God's commandments were continually present to his mind as the rule of his life. Cp. Deut. vi. 6—9; Ps. cxix. 30, 102; and contrast the spirit of the ungodly man in Ps. x. 5.

and I did not put away &c.] In order to sin without compunction. This reading suits the parallelism best, and is preferable to that in 2 Sam., "and as for his statutes, I did not depart from them."

23 I was also upright before him,
And I kept myself from mine iniquity.
24 Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness,
According to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.
25 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful;
With an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright;
26 With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure;
And with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.

23. *upright before him*] R.V., perfect with him. living in the fellowship of a sincere devotion. See note on xv. 2.

I kept myself from mine iniquity] I have watched over myself that I might not transgress, lest I should cherish any sin till it became a part of me. There is no reference to indwelling corruption or a besetting sin.

24—27. The law of God's dealings with men. The assertion of *v.* 20 is repeated as the conclusion to be drawn from the review of David's conduct in *vv.* 21—23, and is confirmed in *vv.* 25—27 by a statement of the general laws of God's moral government. His attitude towards men is and must be conditioned by their attitude towards Him. Cp. 1 Sam. ii. 30; xv. 23. There must be some moral correspondence in a man's character to enable God to reveal Himself to him as 'merciful,' 'perfect,' 'pure.'

25. *With the merciful* &c.] The man whose conduct in life is governed by the spirit of lovingkindness will himself experience the lovingkindness of Jehovah. Cp. Matt. v. 7; vi. 12, 14, 15; and for the meaning of *merciful* see notes on iv. 3, xii. 1, and Appendix, Note I.

with an upright man &c.] Rather as R.V., with the perfect man thou wilt shew thyself perfect. Singlehearted devotion will find a response of unswerving faithfulness.

The text in 2 Sam. has "the perfect hero," the man who is valiant in maintaining his own integrity. But the reading is questionable.

26. *With the pure* &c.] Lit. *one who purifies himself*, cp. 1 John iii. 3. Cp. xxiv. 4, lxxiii. 1. Matt. v. 8 is the N.T. commentary on the words.

and with the froward &c.] Better, as R.V., and with the perverse thou wilt shew thyself froward. The 'perverse' man, whose character is morally distorted, is given over by God to follow his own crooked ways, till they bring him to destruction. God must needs be at cross purposes with the wicked, frustrating their plans, and punishing their wickedness. See Lev. xxvi. 23, 24; Job v. 12, 13; Is. xxix. 9 ff.; Prov. iii. 34; Rom. i. 28; Rev. xxii. 11; and for an illustration comp. the history of Balaam (Num. xxii. 20).

For thou wilt save the afflicted people;
But wilt bring down high looks.
For thou wilt light my candle:
The LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.
For by thee I have run *through* a troop;
And by my God have I leaped over a wall.
As for God, his way *is* perfect:
The word of the LORD is tried:
He *is* a buckler to all those that trust in him.

27 28 29 30

27. *For thou wilt save* &c.] 2 Sam. has the better reading, "and the afflicted people thou wilt save."

the afflicted people] Or, lowly: those who have learnt humility in the school of suffering. See note on ix. 12, and cp. Zeph. iii. 12.

but wilt bring down &c.] **But haughty eyes wilt thou bring low.** "Haughty eyes" are one of the seven things which are an abomination to Jehovah (Prov. vi. 17). Cp. Is. ii. 11, 12, 17.

The parallel text in 2 Sam. has, "Thine eyes are upon the haughty, whom thou wilt bring low."

28—30. These general principles of God's dealing with men are confirmed by David's own experience.

28. For thou dost light my lamp,
Jehovah my God maketh my darkness bright.

The burning lamp is a natural metaphor for the continuance of life and prosperity, derived, it is said, from the Oriental practice of keeping a light constantly burning in the tent or house, which symbolised the maintenance of the life and prosperity of the family. Cp. Job xviii. 6; Prov. xiii. 9. The second line of the verse indicates that the figure here refers to the preservation of David's own life, rather than to the permanence of his dynasty, as in cxxxii. 17; 1 Kings xi. 36, xv. 4.

The text of 2 Sam. has "For thou art my lamp, O LORD." Cp. Ps. xxvii. 1.

29. For by thee I run after a troop,
And by my God I leap over a wall.

The language is general, but it seems to contain a reminiscence of two memorable events in David's life: the successful pursuit of the predatory 'troop' of Amalekites which had sacked Ziklag (1 Sam. xxx; in *vv.* 8, 15, 23 the same word *troop* is used of the Amalekites): and the capture of Zion, effected with such unexpected ease that he seemed to have leapt over the walls which its defenders boasted were impregnable (2 Sam. v. 6—8).

The rendering *run after* is preferable to *break* (A.V. marg.). The point is the speed of the pursuit, not the completeness of the defeat.

30. *As for God* (El), *his way is perfect*, flawless and without blemish, like His work (Deut. xxxii. 4), and His law (Ps. xix. 7): *the word*, or promise, *of the LORD is tried*, refined like pure gold, without dross of uncertainty or insincerity (Ps. xii. 6, cxix. 140): **he is a**

31 For who *is* God save the LORD?
Or who *is* a rock save our God?
32 *It is* God that girdeth me *with* strength,
And maketh my way perfect.
33 He maketh my feet like hinds' *feet*,
And setteth me upon my high places.
34 He teacheth my hands to war,

shield to all them that take refuge in him (*v.* 2). The last two lines are quoted in Prov. xxx. 5.

31—34. The unique character of Jehovah, to whom alone David owes all that he is. Observe how he recognises that the advantages of physical strength and energy, important qualifications in times when the king was himself the leader of the people in battle, were gifts of God; yet that it was not these which saved him and made him victorious, but Jehovah's care and help (*vv.* 35 ff.). Cp. 1 Sam. xvii. 34—36.

31. For who is a God save Jehovah?
And who is a Rock beside our God?

Jehovah alone is *Elōah*, a God to be feared and reverenced. The singular *Elōah* is found instead of the usual plural *Elohim* elsewhere in the Psalter only in l. 22; cxiv. 7; cxxxix. 19. It is used frequently in Job; in Deut. xxxii. 15, 17; Is. xliv. 8; Hab. i. 11, iii. 3; and in a few other passages.

For *Rock* see note on *v.* 2; and for similar declarations of the unique character of Jehovah cp. Deut. xxxii. 31; 1 Sam. ii. 2; 2 Sam. vii. 22.

32. It is *God*] R.V. **The God** [*El*] **that girdeth me with strength.** Cp. *v.* 39; xciii. 1; 1 Sam. ii. 4.

maketh my way perfect] Removing the obstacles which might have hindered me from the complete accomplishment of the career He has marked out for me. Observe the analogy between the perfection of God's way (*v.* 30) and His servant's. Cp. Matt. v. 48 for a higher development of the same thought.

The traditional reading (*Qrē*) in 2 Sam. is, "God is my strong fortress, and guideth my way in perfectness"; while the written text (*Kthībh*) has, "he guideth the perfect in his way": but the exact meaning is obscure. A simpler word has apparently been substituted in the text of the Psalm.

33. *like hinds'* feet] The hind, like the gazelle, was a type of the agility, swiftness, and sure-footedness which were indispensable qualifications in ancient warfare. Cp. 2 Sam. ii. 18; 1 Chron. xii. 8.

setteth me upon my high places] The metaphor of the hind, bounding freely over the hills, is continued. David's high places are the mountain strongholds, the occupation of which secured him in the possession of the country. Cp. Deut. xxxii. 13; and Hab. iii. 19, which is a reminiscence of this passage and Deut. xxxiii. 29.

34. The first line is borrowed in cxliv. 1.

So that a bow of steel is broken *by* mine arms.
Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: 35
And thy right hand hath holden me up,
And thy gentleness hath made me great.
Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, 36
That my feet did not slip.
I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: 37
Neither did I turn again till they were consumed.
I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: 38
They are fallen under my feet.
For thou hast girded me *with* strength unto the battle: 39
Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.

so that a bow of steel &c.] R.V., so that mine arms do bend a bow of brass. The ability to bend a metal bow (cp. Job xx. 24) was a sign of supereminent strength. Readers of the *Odyssey* will recall Ulysses' bow, which no one but himself could bend (Hom. *Od.* xxi. 409).

35—38. But it is not to his own valour that his successes are to be ascribed.

35. Jehovah's saving help has been his defence—cp. *vv.* 2, 3, 46, and Eph. vi. 17:—Jehovah's right hand supports him that his foot should not slip (xx. 2; xciv. 18): Jehovah's condescension—lit. *meekness* or *lowliness*—makes him great. The word is a bold one to apply to God, but its meaning is explained by cxiii. 5, 6; Is. lvii. 15; and the choice of the humble shepherd boy to be the king of Israel was a signal example of this characteristic of the Divine action.

Loving correction (P.B.V.) is a conflate rendering combining παιδεία (*discipline*) from the LXX, and mansuetudo (*gentleness*) from Jerome. The second line of the verse is omitted in 2 Sam.; and *thine answering* (i.e. of prayer) is read in place of *thy condescension*.

36. *enlarged my steps* &c.] Given me free space for unobstructed movement (cp. *v.* 19; Prov. iv. 12), and the power to advance with firm, unwavering steps.

37. Cp. Ex. xv. 9. 2 Sam. reads *destroyed* for *overtaken*.

38. *I have wounded them*] Rather, I have smitten them through (Deut. xxxiii. 11; Job xxvi. 12). 2 Sam. has "Yea I consumed them, and smote them through," the first verb being probably a gloss.

The R.V. renders the verbs in *vv.* 37, 38 as futures (*I will pursue*, &c.), but it is best to regard these verses, like those which precede and those which follow, as a retrospect. See Appendix, Note IV.

39—42. Thus God gave him victory over all his enemies.

39. Cp. *v.* 32 *a*.

those that rose up against me] Enemies in general (Ex. xv. 7; Deut. xxxiii. 11), not necessarily rebellious subjects, though the word is specially applicable to them (iii. 1).

40 Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies;
That I might destroy them that hate me.
41 They cried, but *there was* none to save *them:*
Even unto the LORD, but he answered them not.
42 Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind:
I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.
43 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people,
And thou hast made me the head of the heathen:
A people *whom* I have not known shall serve me.

40. Yea mine enemies hast thou made to turn their backs unto me,
And as for them that hated me, I cut them off.

The first line means that his enemies were put to flight before him (Ex. xxiii. 27), not as the A.V. seems to imply) that he planted his foot on their necks in token of triumph (Josh. x. 24).

41. *They cried*] Cp. *v.* 6. The Heb. text in 2 Sam. has *they looked* for help (Is. xvii. 7, 8), but the LXX supports the reading *cried*, which is certainly right. There is only the difference of one letter in the consonants of the two words (ישועו—וישעו).

Even *unto the LORD*] At first sight this might seem to indicate that the foes referred to were Israelites. But it is better to understand it of the heathen. After vainly seeking help from their own gods, in the extremity of their despair they cry to Jehovah. Cp. 1 Sam. v. 12; Jonah iii. 7 ff.

42. Two figures are combined to express the annihilation of David's enemies. They were, as it were, pounded to dust (2 Kings xiii. 7), and then scattered like that dust driven before the wind. Cp. Is. xxix. 5; xli. 2. 2 Sam. reads only "as the dust of the earth."

I did cast them out &c.] Flung them away as worthless refuse (Zeph. i. 17). But the mire of the streets is usually spoken of as trampled under foot (Is. x. 6; Mic. vii. 10; Zech. x. 5), and it suits the parallelism better to read with the LXX and 2 Sam., *I did stamp them* (Mic. iv. 13). The variation is again due to the confusion of similar letters (אריקם—אריקם). The addition at the end of the verse in 2 Sam., "and did spread them abroad," is probably a gloss.

43—45. The establishment of David's dominion at home and abroad.

43. *from the strivings of the people*] 2 Sam. has "from the strivings of my people," and the reference seems to be to the civil war and internal dissension which disturbed the early years of David's reign, while Saul's house still endeavoured to maintain its position. See 2 Sam. iii. 1. Through all these conflicts he had been safely brought, and made the head of the nations, supreme among surrounding peoples. See 2 Sam. viii. 1—14; Ps. ii. 8.

thou hast made me] In 2 Sam. "thou hast preserved me to be the head of the nations."

a people whom I have not known shall serve me] Rather, a people

As soon as they hear *of me*, they shall obey me: 44
The strangers shall submit themselves unto me.
The strangers shall fade away, 45
And be afraid out of their close places.
The LORD liveth; and blessed *be* my rock; 46
And let the God of my salvation be exalted.
It is God that avengeth me, 47

whom I knew not did serve me. There is no reason for the sudden transition of the A.V. to the future here and in the two following verses. David is still thankfully recounting how God had raised him to his present eminence. There may be a special reference to the subjugation of the Syrians and their allies, whom he might well describe as "a people whom he had not known." See 2 Sam. viii. 6; x. 19.

44. **As soon as they heard of me they offered me obedience.**
Strangers came cringing unto me.

At the mere report of David's victories foreign nations offered their allegiance, as for example Toi of Hamath. See 2 Sam. viii. 9 ff. The word rendered [illegible], marg. *yield feigned obedience*, denotes originally the cawning homage paid by the vanquished to their conqueror. Cp. Deut. xxxiii. 29; Ps. lxvi. 3; lxxxi. 15.

In 2 Sam. the order of the clauses is inverted.

45. **The strangers faded away,**
And came trembling out of their fastnesses.

Their strength and courage failed like a withering leaf or a fading flower (Is. xxviii. 1, 4), and they surrendered at discretion to the triumphant invader. Cp. Mic. vii. 17; 1 Sam. xiv. 11. The obscure reading in 2 Sam. may mean "came limping out of their fastnesses"; a picture of the exhausted defenders of the fortress dragging themselves along with difficulty and reluctant to lay down their arms before the conqueror. The LXX gives this rendering (ἐχωλάνθησαν) in the Psalm.

46—50. Concluding thanksgiving and doxology.

46. *The LORD liveth*] Life is the essential attribute of Jehovah. He is the Living God in contrast to the dead gods of the heathen. The experience of David's life is summed up in these words. It had been to him a certain proof that God is the living, active Ruler of the world. Cp. Josh. iii. 10.

and let &c.] R.V., and exalted be the God of my salvation. Cp. xxiv. 5. 2 Sam. reads, "the God of the rock of my salvation."

47. Render:
Even the God that executed vengeance for me,
And subdued peoples under me.

Vengeance is the prerogative of God (xciv. 1); it is His vindication of the righteousness and integrity of His servants. Such a thanksgiving as this does not shew a spirit of vindictiveness in David, but is a recognition that God had 'pleaded his cause,' and maintained the right. God had avenged him for the cruel injustice of Saul (1 Sam.

And subdueth the people under me.
48 He delivereth me from mine enemies:
Yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me:
Thou hast delivered me from the violent man.
49 Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen,
And sing *praises* unto thy name.
50 Great deliverance giveth he to his king;

xxiv. 12); for the contemptuous insults of Nabal (1 Sam. xxv. 39); for the factious opposition of those who refused to acknowledge him as king in spite of his Divine call (2 Sam. iv. 8).

The second line of the verse refers, like *v.* 43, to success in overcoming internal as well as external opposition to his rule. Cp. cxliv. 2. It is not, however, the boast of a triumphant tyrant, but the thanksgiving of a ruler who recognised the vital importance of union for the prosperity of Israel, and knew that the task of reconciling the discordant elements in the nation was beyond his own unaided powers.

For *subdueth* 2 Sam. has 'bringeth down.'

48. My deliverer from mine enemies;
Yea, thou didst set me on high from them that rose up against me,
From the man of violence didst thou rescue me.

My deliverer, as in *v.* 2. 2 Sam. has "that bringeth me forth." **The man of violence** might mean men of violence in general, but it is more natural to regard it as a reference to Saul. Cp. cxl. 1, 4, 11.

49. The celebration of Jehovah's faithfulness to His servant is not to be confined within the narrow limits of Israel. His praise is to be proclaimed among the nations, which, as they are brought under the dominion of His people, may eventually be brought to the knowledge of Jehovah. Cp. xcvi. 3, 10. This verse is quoted by St. Paul in Rom. xv. 9 (together with Deut. xxxii. 43; Ps. cxvii. 1; Is. xi. 10), in proof that the Old Testament anticipated the admission of the Gentiles to the blessings of salvation.

50. These closing words may be due to a later poet, who thus sums up the lessons of the Psalm. But they may well be David's own. He drops the first person, and surveys his own life from without, in the light of the great promise of 2 Sam. vii. 12—16. These are the deliverances Jehovah has wrought for the king of His choice; this is a sample of the lovingkindness which He has shewn to His Anointed, and will shew to his seed for evermore. The words reach forward to the perfect life, and the world-wide victories, of the Christ, the Son of David.

Great deliverance &c.] Lit. *He magnifieth the salvations of his king.* Cp. xx. 6. The *Kthībh* and the Versions in 2 Sam. have the same reading: but the *Qrē*, which the A.V. follows, has "He is a tower of deliverance for his king." Cp. Ps. lxi. 3; Prov. xviii. 10.

And sheweth mercy to his anointed,
To David, and to his seed for evermore.

The consonants of the two words, as originally written defectively and without vowels, are identical.

mercy] lovingkindness. Cp. xvii. 7; 2 Sam. vii. 15.

PSALM XIX.

This Psalm consists of two distinct parts. The first part celebrates the revelation of the Power and Majesty of God in Nature, the universal and unceasing testimony of the heavens to their Creator (*vv.* 1—6). The second part celebrates the moral beauty and beneficent power of Jehovah's 'Law' in its manifold elements and aspects (*vv.* 7—11); and the Psalmist, viewing his own life in the sight of this holy Law, concludes with a prayer for pardon, preservation, and acceptance (*vv.* 12—14).

The identity of the Lawgiver of Israel with the Creator of the Universe was a fundamental principle of Old Testament religion (Amos iv. 13; v. 7, 8): and the Psalm is certainly intended to suggest a comparison between the universal revelation of God's majesty in creation, manifest to all mankind (Rom. i. 19, 20), and the special revelation of His moral character and of man's duty in His 'Law,' given to Israel only. The use of the Divine names is significant. In the first part God is styled *El*, as the God of power, the Creator: in the second part He is styled Jehovah (seven times repeated), the Name by which He made Himself known as the covenant God of Israel, the God of grace and redemption.

Were the two parts the work of one poet? Form, style, and tone point to a negative answer. No doubt the same poet might have adopted a fresh rhythm to correspond to the change of subject; and the abruptness of the transition from one part to the other cannot be pressed as an argument against unity of authorship, for it is quite in accordance with the spirit of Hebrew poetry to place two thoughts side by side, and leave the reader to draw the intended inference. But the closest parallel to the first part is Ps. viii: to the second, Ps. cxix.

We know from the example of Ps. cviii that no scruples were felt in combining parts of different poems into a new whole; and it seems most probable that the second part of the Psalm was written as a supplement to part of an already existing poem, or that portions of two poems were combined, with a view of suggesting the comparison between God's two great volumes of Nature and the Scriptures.

Each of these volumes has its special lessons. Rightly interpreted, they can never be in conflict. "It is written," says Lord Bacon, "*Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei;* but it is not written *coeli enarrant voluntatem Dei:* but of that it is said, *ad legem et testimonium: si non fecerint secundum verbum istud &c.*" (*Advancement of Learning*, II. 25, 3).

"The starry sky above me," said Kant, "and the moral law in me,... are two things which fill the soul with ever new and increasing admiration and reverence." Wallace's *Kant*, p. 53.

What does the Psalmist mean by "the law of Jehovah," which he describes in different aspects as testimony, precepts, commandment, fear, judgements? It is the moral law embodied in the Pentateuch, but not this exclusively, but all the priestly and prophetic teaching by which Jehovah's will was made known. The "Law" is to the writer no burdensome and vexatious restriction of liberty, but a gracious reflection of the holiness of God, designed to lead man in the way of life and peace. Yet already in the closing verse we have a hint of the sterner function of the Law as an instrument for teaching men to know their own sinfulness (Rom. iii. 20), and to feel the need of an effectual atonement (Rom. viii. 3).

Ps. xix is one of the Proper Psalms for Christmas Day. The Revelation of God in Nature, and the Revelation of God in His Word, prepared the way for the crowning Revelation of God in the Incarnation (Bp. Perowne).

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

19 The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament sheweth his handywork.
2 Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night sheweth knowledge.

1—6. The universal revelation of God in Nature.

1. "The glory of the LORD" denotes (1) that visible manifestation of His Presence by which He was wont to reveal Himself to Israel, the *Shechinah* as it was called in later times (Ex. xvi. 7, 10; xxxiii. 22; Rom. ix. 4): and (2) in a wider sense, as here, the glory of God is the unique majesty of His Being as it is revealed to man, that manifestation of His Deity which the creature should recognise with reverent adoration. All creation is a revelation of God, but the heavens in their vastness, splendour, order, and mystery are the most impressive reflection of His greatness and majesty. The simplest observer can read the message; but how much more emphatic and significant has it become through the discoveries of modern astronomy!

the firmament] Lit. *the expanse:* the vault of heaven, spread out over the earth (Gen. i. 6 ff.; Job xxxvii. 18), proclaims what He has done and can do.

2. This proclamation is continuous and unceasing. "Dies diem docet." Each day, each night, hands on the message to its successor in an unbroken tradition. Day and night are mentioned separately, for each has a special message entrusted to it: the day tells of splendour, power, beneficence; the night tells of vastness, order, mystery, beauty, repose. They are "like the two parts of a choir, chanting forth alternately the praises of God." (Bp. Horne.)

uttereth] Lit. *pours out*, in copious abundance.

sheweth] Or, *proclaimeth*, a different word from that of v. 1. *Knowledge* is "that which may be known of God" (Rom. i. 19). "Aristotle

There is no speech nor language,
Where their voice is not heard.
Their line is gone out through all the earth, 4

says[1], that should a man live under ground, and there converse with works of art and mechanism, and should afterwards be brought up into the open day, and see the several glories of the heaven and earth, he would immediately pronounce them the works of such a being as we define God to be." Addison in *The Spectator*, No. 465.

3. (*a*) The rendering of A.V. means that the message of the heavens reaches all nations of every language alike, and is intelligible to them. But the Heb. word is rendered *speech* and *language* will not bear this explanation.

(*b*) The rendering

It is not a speech or words
Whose voice is unintelligible,

is that of most of the ancient versions (LXX, Aq., Symm., Theod., Vulg., Jer.). But it does not satisfy the parallelism, and it is unnatural to refer *their voice* to 'speech and words' rather than to 'the heavens.'

(*c*) It is best to render (cp. R.V.)

There is neither speech nor words,
Unheard is their voice.

Their message though real is inarticulate. Thus understood, the verse qualifies *v.* 2, and is in close connexion with *v.* 4. Theirs is a silent eloquence, yet it reaches from one end of the world to the other. Comp. Addison's paraphrase:

"What though in solemn silence all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball?
What though nor real voice nor sound
Amid their radiant orbs be found?
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
For ever singing, as they shine,
'The hand that made us is divine'."

4. This proclamation is universal. The phrase *Their line is gone out* &c., is to be explained by Jer. xxxi. 39; Zech. i. 16. The measuring line marks the limits of possession. The whole earth is the sphere throughout which the heavens have to proclaim their message. The rendering of P.B.V. *their sound* follows LXX, Vulg., Symm., Jer., Syr., but it is not justifiable as a rendering of the present text, though it may be got by an easy emendation.

A wider application is given to these words by St Paul in Rom. x. 18. But his use of them is not merely the adoption of a convenient phrase. It implies a comparison of the universality of the proclamation of the Gospel with the universality of the proclamation of God's glory in Nature.

[1] The passage is a fragment of Aristotle's *Dialogue on Philosophy* quoted by Cicero *De Natura Deorum*, ii. 37. 95, and is well worth referring to.

And their words to the end of the world.
In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,
5 Which *is* as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
And rejoiceth as a strong *man* to run a race.
6 His going forth *is* from the end of the heaven,
And his circuit unto the ends of it:
And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

7 The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul:
The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple.

In them &c.] How naturally the poet singles out the Sun as the chief witness to God's glory, and personifies it as though it were a king or hero, for whose abode the Creator has fixed a tent in the heavens.

5. Thence he comes forth morning by morning like the bridegroom in all the splendour of his bridal attire, in all the freshness of youthful vigour and buoyant happiness (Is. lxi. 10; lxii. 5): like the hero exulting in the consciousness of strength, and eager to put it to the proof. Cp. Jud. v. 31.

6. The beneficent influences of his light and heat are universally felt.

7—11. Yet more wonderful than this declaration of God's glory, more beneficent than the sun's life-giving light and heat, is Jehovah's revelation of His will, which quickens and educates man's moral nature. Its essential characteristics and its beneficent influences are described with an enthusiastic and loving admiration.

Note the peculiar rhythm of vv. 7—9, in which each line is divided by a well-marked caesura. Cp. Lam. i. 1 ff. See *Introd.* p. lx.

7. *The law of the* LORD] Instruction, teaching, doctrine, are the ideas connected with the word *torah*, rendered *law*. See on i. 2. Like Jehovah's work (Deut. xxxii. 4), and His way (Ps. xviii. 30), it is *perfect*, complete, flawless; without defect or error; a guide which can neither mislead nor fail. Observe that the name JEHOVAH now takes the place of *God* (v. 1); for we have entered the sphere of the special revelation to Israel.

converting the soul] Rather, as R.V., **restoring the soul**: refreshing and invigorating man's true self (cp. xxiii. 3); like food to the hungry (Lam. i. 11, 19); like comfort to the sorrowful and afflicted (Lam. i. 16; Ruth iv. 15).

the testimony] The 'law,' regarded as bearing witness to Jehovah's will, and man's duty (Ex. xxv. 16, 21). It is *sure*, not variable or uncertain. Cp. xciii. 5, cxi. 7.

the simple] A character often mentioned in Proverbs (i. 4, &c.): the man whose mind is *open* to the entrance of good or evil. He has not closed his heart against instruction, but he has no fixed principle to repel temptation. He needs to be made wise. Cp. cxix. 130; 2 Tim. iii. 15.

The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: 8
The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes.
The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever: 9
The judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether.
More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine 10
gold:
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
Moreover by them *is* thy servant warned: 11
And in keeping of them *there is* great reward.
Who can understand *his* errors? 12
Cleanse thou me from secret *faults*.
Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins*; 13

8. *The statutes*] Rather, as R.V., the precepts, the various special injunctions in which man's obligations are set forth. These *make glad the heart* with the joy of moral satisfaction.

pure] An epithet applied to the sun, Cant. vi. 10. "The law is light" (Prov. vi. 23), and light-giving. Cp. cxix. 105, 130; Eph. i. 18.

9. *The fear of the LORD*] Another synonym for the 'law,' inasmuch as its aim and object is to implant the fear of God in men's hearts. (Deut. iv. 10). It is *clean* or *pure* (xii. 6), in contrast to the immoralities of heathenism. It is like Jehovah Himself (Hab. i. 13), and like Him, it *stands fast for ever* (cii. 26); for "righteousness is immortal" (Wisd. i. 15).

The judgments] Decisions, ordinances. These *are truth* (John xvii. 17); one and all they are in accordance with the standard of absolute justice (Deut. iv. 8).

10. Such is the law in all its parts; a treasure to be coveted; the sweetest of enjoyments when received into the heart. Cp. cxix. 72, 103, 127.

the honeycomb] Lit. *the droppings of the honeycomb*, the purest honey which drops naturally from the comb.

11. The Psalmist, as Jehovah's servant, *lets himself be warned* by the law. Cp. Ezek. xxxiii. 4 ff.

great reward] Cp. Prov. xxii. 4; 1 Tim. iv. 8, vi. 6.

12—14. The contemplation of this holy law leads the Psalmist to express his personal need of preservation and guidance.

12. More exactly:

Errors who can discern?
From hidden (faults) clear thou me.

Who can be aware of the manifold lapses of ignorance or inadvertence? Acquit me, do not hold me guilty in respect of them.

13. For sins committed 'in error,' (A.V. *through ignorance*) and for 'hidden' offences, the ceremonial law provided an atonement (Lev. iv. 1 ff., 13 ff., v. 2 ff.; Num. xv. 22 ff.); but for sins committed 'with a

Let them not have dominion over me:
Then shall I be upright,
And I shall be innocent from *the* great transgression.
14 Let the words of my mouth,
And the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight,
O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

high hand,' in a spirit of proud defiance, there was no atonement (Num. xv. 30, 31). From such *presumptuous sin* he prays to be restrained, as David was once restrained from a desperate act of revenge (1 Sam. xxv. 39). Such sins soon become a man's masters, and he becomes their slave (John viii. 34). They *rule over him*, instead of his ruling over them (Gen. iv. 7). For *presumptuous*, lit. *proud*, cp. *presumptuously*, lit. *in pride*, Ex. xxi. 14; Deut. xvii. 12, 13.

Then (he continues) if Thou dost grant me this grace, **shall I be perfect**, heart-whole with Thee (xviii. 23), **and I shall be clear from great transgression**, innocent of the deadly sin of rebellion (Is. i. 2) and apostasy from Jehovah.

But the word rendered '*presumptuous* sins' everywhere else means '*proud* men,' and this may be its meaning here. The Psalmist prays to be saved from the oppression of the proud and godless, lest he should be tempted even to deny God. Cp. Ps. cxix. 121, 122; and note how often "the proud" are mentioned in that Psalm, and how the thought of faithfulness to the Law in the teeth of mockery and persecution is emphasised (*vv.* 51, 69, 78, 85—87).

14. *be acceptable*] An expression borrowed from the laws of sacrifice. See Lev. i. 3, 4 (R.V.); cp. Ex. xxviii. 38. Prayer, "uttered or unexpressed," is a spiritual sacrifice. Cp. cxli. 2; Hos. xiv. 2.

The P.B.V., *be always acceptable*, is from the LXX. The Heb. for *always* would be *tāmīd*. If this word may be restored to the text on the authority of the LXX, it would suggest a reference to the daily sacrifice which was to be offered *continually* (Ex. xxix. 38 ff.), and in later times was called the *Tāmīd*.

my strength &c.] **My rock** (see on xviii. 2), and *my redeemer*, delivering me from the tyranny of enemies and the bondage of sin, as He delivered Israel from the bondage of Egypt. Cp. Ex. xv. 13; Is. lxiii. 9.

PSALM XX.

The 20th and 21st Psalms are closely related in structure and contents. Both are liturgical Psalms: the first is an intercession, the second a thanksgiving. In both the king, the representative of Jehovah and the representative of the people, is the prominent figure; and the salvation or victory which Jehovah bestows upon him is the leading thought.

In Ps. xx the king is preparing to go out to battle against formidable enemies. Before starting he offers solemn sacrifices, and commits his cause to Jehovah, the sole Giver of victory. The Psalm was apparently

intended to be sung while the sacrifice was being offered. But there is a spirit of simple faith in Jehovah's aid. Israel's enemies rely upon their material forces: Israel trusts in Jehovah alone.

In Psalm xxi the campaign is over. The victory is won. The people with their king are again assembled to give thanks for the salvation which Jehovah has wrought for them; and in the flush of victory they anticipate with confidence the future triumphs of their king.

There is little to determine the particular occasion of these Psalms. The title of Ps. xx in the Syriac Version refers it to David's war with the Ammonites: and some commentators see in xx. 7 an allusion to the chariots and horses of the Syrians who were in alliance with the Ammonites (2 Sam. viii. 4, x. 18); and in xxi. 3, 9 allusions to the circumstances of the capture of Rabbah (2 Sam. xii. 30, 31). Others think that the king may have been Asa (2 Chr. xiv. 9), or Uzziah (2 Chr. xxvi). The personal importance of the king as the leader of the army, and the spirit of simple trust in Jehovah, not in material forces, point to an early rather than a late date. If the Psalms refer to David, it is natural to suppose that they were written by some poet other than the king himself.

Ps. xx consists of two stanzas with a concluding verse.

i. The people's intercession for the king, sung by the congregation, or by the Levites on their behalf, while the sacrifice was being offered (1—5).

ii. A priest or prophet (or possibly the king himself) declares the acceptance of the sacrifice, and confidently anticipates victory (6—8).

iii. Concluding prayer of the whole congregation (9).

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; 20
The name of the God of Jacob defend thee;
Send thee help from the sanctuary, 2

1—5. The people's prayer for their king's success.

1. *hear thee*] R.V., **answer thee**, and so in *vv.* 6, 9.

the day of trouble] Or *distress*, when *adversaries* (a cognate word) press him hard. The impending campaign is specially, though not exclusively, meant. Cp. xlvi. 1; Num. x. 9.

The name &c.] May the God of Jacob prove Himself to be all that His Name implies (see on v. 11): may He Who is a tower of refuge (ix. 9, xviii. 2) set thee up on high in safety from thy enemies. Cp. Prov. xviii. 10. *God of Jacob* is often synonymous with *God of Israel* (xlvi. 7, 11); yet the choice of this name cannot but suggest the thought of Jehovah's providential care for the great ancestor of the nation. Cp. the exactly similar language of Gen. xxxv. 3: "God, who *answered me in the day of my distress*;" and the references to Jacob's history in Hos. xii. 4, 5.

2. *the sanctuary*] Here, as the parallel *out of Zion* shews, the earthly sanctuary is meant. See notes on iii. 4, xiv. 7; and cp. *v.* 6.

And strengthen thee out of Zion;
3 Remember all thy offerings,
And accept thy burnt sacrifice. Selah.
4 Grant thee according to thine own heart,
And fulfil all thy counsel.
5 We will rejoice in thy salvation,
And in the name of our God we will set up *our* banners:
The LORD fulfil all thy petitions.
6 Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed:

strengthen] Lit. *support;* the same word as *hath holden me up* in xviii. 35.

3. May He remember all the offerings by which in past time the king has expressed his self-devotion and his dependence on Jehovah, and accept those by which he is now consecrating the present expedition. For sacrifice before a war see 1 Sam. vii. 9, 10, xiii. 9—12; and cp. the phrase *to sanctify a war* (Jer. vi. 4, R.V. marg.). *Offering* properly denotes the so-called *meal-offering*, which accompanied the *burnt-offering*.

Remember] Possibly an allusion to the *memorial*, or part of the meal-offering which was burnt by the priest on the altar, as it were bringing the worshippers for whom it was offered to God's remembrance (Lev. ii. 2, 9, 16; Acts x. 4).

accept] Lit., *regard as fat*. The fat, as the choicest part, was Jehovah's portion, and was always to be burnt (Lev. iii. 3 ff. 16). Less probable is the alternative in A.V. marg., *turn to ashes*, by fire from heaven (Lev. ix. 24).

4. *according to thine own heart*] The literal rendering of the Heb. The R.V. restores the more graceful rendering of P.B.V., *thy heart's desire;* but the expression is a different one from that in xxi. 2.

counsel] In the war. Cp. 2 Sam. xvi. 20; 2 Kings xviii. 20.

5. The prayer is still continued. *Let us* (or, *That we may*) *shout for joy at thy salvation;* Jehovah Himself was Israel's Saviour (xxi. 1; 1 Sam. x. 19), and the king was His chosen instrument for saving His people (2 Sam. iii. 18).

set up our *banners*] Rather, wave them in token of triumph, than set them up as a memorial of the victory. The cognate substantive is specially used of the *standards* of the tribes (Num. i. 52, ii 2 ff.). Cp. Cant. vi. 4, 10.

The LXX however has, *we shall be magnified.*

petitions] Cp. xxi. 2.

6—8. The sacrifice has been offered. Faith regards it as accepted, and in its acceptance sees the pledge of victory. The voice of a priest, or prophet, or possibly of the king himself, is now heard proclaiming this confidence (*v.* 6), and professing for himself and the people their trust in Jehovah alone (*vv.* 7, 8).

6. *Now know I*] Cp. lvi. 9, cxxxv. 5.

He will hear him from his holy heaven
With the saving strength of his right hand.
Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses: 7
But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.
They are brought down and fallen: 8
But we are risen, and stand upright.
Save, LORD: 9
Let the king hear us when we call.

saveth] Lit., *hath saved*: i.e. *will surely save*. To faith the victory is already won. Cp. the tenses in *v.* 8, and see Appendix, Note IV.

his anointed] The title which expresses the king's consecration to Jehovah is the pledge of his right to expect Jehovah's help (Hab. iii. 13).

he will hear him] R.V., he will answer him (as in *vv.* 1, 9) from his holy heaven, of which the holy place in Zion (*v.* 2) is but the earthly type.

with the saving strength &c.] Lit., *with mighty acts of salvation of his right hand*: the mighty acts of deliverance (cvi. 2, cl. 2) wrought by the right hand of the Most High (xvii. 7, lx. 5). Cp. xxi. 13.

7. *Some*] The heathen enemy, like Pharaoh (Ex. xiv), and Sennacherib (2 Kings xix. 23); not here heathenish Israelites, as in Is. xxxi. 1—3.

But we will remember the name] R.V., But we will make mention of the name &c. This shall be our watchword and our strength. Cp. Jud. vii. 18; 1 Sam. xvii. 45; 2 Chr. xvi. 8, 9; Ps. xxxiii. 16 f.; Is. xxvi. 13; Hos. i. 7.

8. *They are brought down*] R.V., They are bowed down; the same word as in xviii. 39. It is still the language of faith, anticipating the entire subjugation of the enemy, and the triumph of Israel.

9. Concluding prayer of the people.

The rendering of A.V. and R.V. follows the punctuation of the Massoretic text. The prayer *for* the earthly king is addressed *to* the heavenly King whose representative he is. But Jehovah is not elsewhere styled absolutely *the King* (cxlv. 1 and Is. vi. 5 are not complete parallels); and the verse appears to correspond to *v.* 6. It seems best to follow the LXX and Vulg. in reading *O LORD, save the king; and answer us* &c. The rendering of the Vulg. *Domine salvum fac regem* is the origin of the familiar *God save the king*. See note on 1 Sam. x. 24. The P.B.V., *Save Lord, and hear us, O King of heaven, when we call upon thee*, is a free combination of the Heb. and Vulg. (LXX).

PSALM XXI.

Thanksgiving for victory is the leading motive of this Psalm, which is, as has already been remarked, a companion to Ps. xx. Its occasion need not be looked for in a coronation festival (*v.* 3), or a royal birth-

day (*v.* 4). It is quite natural that thanksgiving for victory should lead the poet to speak of the high dignity of the king, and to anticipate his future victories (*vv.* 8—12).

The exalted language of *vv.* 4—6 has led some interpreters to deny the historical reference of the Psalm, and to regard it as a prophecy of the Messianic King. The Targ. paraphrases *king* in *vv.* 1 and 7 by *king Messiah*. Such an interpretation is excluded by the general sense of the Psalm. The language applied to the king is not without parallel in the O. T.; and it is illustrated by expressions in the Assyrian royal Psalms: e.g. "Distant days, everlasting years, a strong weapon, a long life, many days of honour, supremacy among the kings, grant to the king, the lord, who made this offering to his gods" (quoted by Prof. Cheyne). Israel was not uninfluenced by the thoughts and language common to Oriental nations: and if other nations believed that their kings were reflections of the divinity, Israel believed that its king was the representative of Jehovah. Language which startles us by its boldness was used of him: language which was adopted and adapted by the Holy Spirit with a prophetic purpose, and only receives its 'fulfilment' in Christ. The Psalm then has a prophetic aspect, and looks forward through the earthly king of whom it spoke in the first instance, to Him who "must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. xv. 25).

Hence its selection as one of the Proper Psalms for Ascension Day.

The structure of the Psalm is similar to that of Ps. xx.

i. A thanksgiving on behalf of the king for the victory granted to him: addressed to Jehovah and probably sung by the congregation or the Levites (1—7).

ii. Anticipation of future triumphs, addressed to the king, and perhaps sung by a priest (8—12).

iii. Concluding prayer of the congregation (13).

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

21 The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD;
And in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!
2 Thou hast given him his heart's desire,
And hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah.
3 For thou preventest him *with* the blessings of goodness:

1—7. The people's thanksgiving for Jehovah's favour to their king.

1. The prayers of Ps. xx have been answered. The victory is won, and the king rejoices. He has trusted in Jehovah, and now the ground of his rejoicing is the strength which Jehovah has put forth on his behalf, the deliverance which Jehovah has wrought for him. Cp. ix. 14; Ex. xv. 2.

2. This verse refers chiefly, but not exclusively, to the prayers for the success of the expedition referred to in xx. 3—5.

3. *thou preventest him* &c.] For *prevent*, see note on xviii. 18. Jehovah, as it were, *goes to meet* the king and bless him with success

Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.
He asked life of thee. *and* thou gavest *it* him,
Even length of days for ever and ever.
His glory *is* great in thy salvation:
Honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.
For thou hast made him most blessed for ever:
Thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.
For the king trusteth in the LORD,
And through the mercy of the most High he shall not be moved.
Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies:
Thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.
Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger:

(*goodness*=good things, Prov. xxiv. 25): and once more crowns him king. The victory is a Divine confirmation of his sovereignty (1 Sam. xi. 13 ff.). There may possibly be an allusion to the crown of the Ammonite king (2 Sam. xii. 30).

4. *He asked...thou gavest*] Cp. ii. 8. Long life was one of Jehovah's special blessings under the old covenant. It was a natural object of desire when the hope of a future life was all but a blank. See Ex. xxiii. 26; 1 Kings iii. 11; Prov. iii. 2. But how can *length of days for ever and ever* be said of a mortal king? Partly in the same way as the salutation "Let the king live for ever" was used (1 Kings i. 31; Neh. ii. 3), partly because he was regarded as living on in his posterity (2 Sam. vii. 29). Cp. xlv. 2, 6; lxi. 6; lxxii. 5, 17.

5. Glory, honour, majesty, are Divine attributes (viii. 1, 5; civ. 1); and the victorious king shines with a reflection of them.

hast thou laid] Rather as R.V., dost thou lay. Cp. lxxxix. 19 for the same word used of Divine endowment.

6. R.V. **For thou makest him most blessed for ever:**
Thou makest him glad with joy in thy presence.
Lit. *thou makest him blessings*, the possessor and the medium of blessing. Cp. Gen. xii. 2. The victory is a pledge of Divine favour and fellowship, an evidence that the king walks in the light of Jehovah's countenance. Cp. iv. 6; xvi. 11; lxxxix. 15; cxl. 13.

7. The grounds of this blessing: on the king's side, trust; on God's side, **loving**kindness (xviii. 50). This verse forms the transition to the second division of the Psalm.

8—12. The king, who must be supposed to be present, is now addressed. This victory is an earnest of future victories. The total destruction of all his enemies is confidently anticipated.

8. *shall find out*] Reach them and get them into thy power (1 Sam. xxiii. 17).

9. *Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven*] R.V., as a fiery furnace.

The LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire
shall devour them.
10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth,
And their seed from among the children of men.
11 For they intended evil against thee:
They imagined a mischievous device, *which* they are not
able *to perform.*
12 Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back,
When thou shalt make ready *thine arrows* upon thy strings
against the face of them.
13 Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength:
So will we sing and praise thy power.

The comparison is condensed, and inexact in form: but the sense is clear: thou wilt consume them as fuel in a furnace. The phrase is figurative (Mal. iv. 1): yet there may be an allusion to the terrible vengeance inflicted on the Ammonites (2 Sam. xii. 31).

in the time of thine anger] Lit. *in the time of thy countenance*, or *presence:* when Thou appearest in person. Cp. 2 Sam. xvii. 11. 'The face of Jehovah' is the manifestation of His Presence in wrath as well as in mercy (xxxiv. 16); and the king is His representative.

10. Even their posterity shall be utterly destroyed. Cp. ix. 5; xxxvii. 28. *Fruit*=children, 'the fruit of the womb' (Lam. ii. 20).

11, 12. Though they threaten thee with evil,
Though they devise a mischievous plan, they shall avail naught,
For thou shalt make them turn their backs,
Aiming with thy bowstrings against their faces.

13. The congregation's concluding prayer (as in xx. 9), returning to the thought of *v.* 1. Jehovah is exalted when He manifests His strength (vii. 6; xlvi. 10; lvii. 5, 11). R.V., in thy strength, for *in thine own strength.*

thy power] **Thy might**, made known in mighty acts of salvation (xx. 6).

PSALM XXII.

The first and greatest of the 'Passion Psalms,' consecrated for us by our Lord's appropriation of it to Himself. His utterance of the opening words of it upon the Cross has been thought with much probability to indicate that the whole Psalm was the subject of His meditations during those hours of agony. But this application and fulfilment does not exclude a primary and historical reference.

A. i. The Psalm opens with the agonised cry of a persecuted saint, who feels himself deserted by God (*vv.* 1, 2). He appeals to the character of God (*v.* 3) and to the experience of His mercy in past ages (*vv.* 4, 5), whereas he is the butt and victim of scornful persecutors

(vv. 6—8), though from his birth he has been cast upon God (vv. 9, 10).

ii. He urges his plea for help (*v.* 11), describing alternately the virulence of his foes (vv. 12, 13, 16, 18), and the pitiable plight to which he is reduced (vv. 14, 15, 17). Still more earnestly he repeats his prayer (vv. 19—21), till in an instant the certainty of deliverance flashes upon him (21 *b*).

B. i. The darkness of despair is past. He can look forward with confidence to the future. He avows his purpose to proclaim God's goodness in a public act of thanksgiving (*v.* 22), calling upon all that fear Jehovah to join him in adoration (vv. 23, 24), and to share the blessings of the eucharistic feast (*vv.* 25, 26).

ii. And now a yet sublimer prospect opens to his view. Jehovah's sovereignty will one day be universally recognised (vv. 27—29), and His gracious Providence will be celebrated by all succeeding generations (*vv.* 30, 31).

The Psalm thus falls into two divisions, each of which is subdivided into two nearly equal parts.

A. Present needs. i. Plaintive expostulation (1—10). ii. Prayer for deliverance (11—21).

B. Future hopes. i. Thanksgiving for answered prayer (22—26). ii. The extension of Jehovah's kingdom (27—31).

Commentators differ widely in their views of the scope, occasion, and date of the Psalm. The chief lines of interpretation may be termed the personal, the ideal, the national, and the predictive.

(1) The first impression produced by the Psalm is that it is a record of personal experience. The title ascribes it to David, and it has been variously supposed to reflect the circumstances of Saul's persecution, or Absalom's rebellion, or perhaps to gather into one focus all the vicissitudes of a life of much trial, or possibly to describe the fate he feared at some crisis rather than actual experiences. Delitzsch, who maintains the Davidic authorship, supposes it to have been written with reference to David's narrow escape from Saul in the wilderness of Maon (1 Sam. xxiii. 25 f.). But he admits that the history gives us no ground for supposing that David actually underwent such sufferings as are here described. There is, he thinks, an element of poetic hyperbole in the picture, which has been used by the Spirit of God with a prophetic purpose. The Psalm has its roots in David's own experience, but its language reaches far beyond it to the sufferings of Christ.

Others have thought of Hezekiah, whose deliverance and recovery made an impression upon foreign nations (2 Chr. xxxii. 23); others, with more probability, of Jeremiah, with special reference perhaps to the situation described in ch. xxxvii. 11 ff.; others of some unknown poet of the Exile.

(2) But many features in the Psalm appear to transcend the limits of an individual experience. Hence some have seen in the speaker the ideal person of the righteous sufferer. The Psalm describes how the righteous must suffer in the world; how Jehovah delivers him in his extremity; how that deliverance redounds to His glory and the extension of His kingdom.

(3) From a somewhat similar point of view others have regarded the speaker as a personification of the Jewish nation, persecuted by the heathen, apparently forsaken by Jehovah.

(4) Others, again, concentrating their attention upon the striking agreement of the Psalm even in minute details with the facts of Christ's Passion, have regarded it as wholly predictive.

Each of these lines of interpretation contains some truth; none is complete by itself. The intensely personal character of the Psalm bears witness that it springs from the experience of an individual life; yet it goes beyond an individual experience; the Psalmist is a representative character: he has also learned to identify himself with the sufferings of others like himself, perhaps even of Israel as a nation; he interprets their thoughts; to some extent, secondarily at any rate, he is the mouthpiece of the nation. But the Psalm goes further. It is prophetic. These sufferings were so ordered by the Providence of God as to be typical of the sufferings of Christ: the mind of the writer was so inspired by the Spirit of God, as in foresight, even to detail, many of the circumstances of the Crucifixion, while the glorious hopes for the future anticipate most marvellously the blessed consequences of the Passion; *ut non prophetia potius narrare videatur quam precari*. But the fulfilment far transcends the prophetic outline, and reveals what in the Psalm is but hinted at, if so much can be found, of the connexion of redemption with suffering.

It is impossible to speak definitely about the date and authorship of the Psalm. It is certainly difficult to connect it with what we know of David's life; and we seem rather to be within the circle of prophetic thought out of which spring the prophecies of the suffering servant of Jehovah in the second book of Isaiah. The parallels with that book should be carefully studied. Yet the portrait there is more fully developed. The ultimate purpose of suffering is more explicitly realised. Here, though suffering is borne in the light of suffering, there is no organic connexion shewn between them.

The Psalm should be studied in the light of its fulfilment in regard both to its general drift and to particular allusions. The opening words were uttered by Christ upon the Cross (Matt. xxvii. 46; Mark xv. 34). St John (xix. 24 expressly) points to the partition of Christ's garments by the soldiers as a fulfilment of *v.* 18 (cp. Matt. xxvii. 35, where however the quotation is interpolated). *vv.* 14 ff. are a startlingly graphic anticipation of the agonies of crucifixion, even to the piercing of the hands and feet. The mockery of the bystanders is described in the language of the Psalm, and the chief phrases borne in by their scoffing (*vv.* 7 ff., cp. Matt. xxvii. 39—44; Mark xv. 29 ff.; Luke xxiii. 35 ff.). The words of thanksgiving (*v.* 22) are applied to Christ by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (ii. 12). The application of the concluding verses is obvious, though no special reference is made to them in the N.T.

Yet it should be observed in how many points the type falls short of the fulfilment. It could not be otherwise. It is but one of many fragments of truth revealed beforehand which were to be summed up and receive their explanation in Christ.

Two points deserve special notice in connexion with the Messianic

application of the Psalm. It contains no confession of sin; and it has none of the terrible imprecations which startle us in the kindred Psalms lxix and cix.

The choice of the Psalm as a Proper Psalm for Good Friday needs no comment.

To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David. 22

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
Why art thou so far from helping me, *and from* the words of my roaring?

upon Ayeleth Shahar] Rather, set to Ayyéleth hash-Shahar, i.e. *the hind of the morning*, the title of some song to the melody of which the Psalm was to be sung, so called either from its opening words or from its subject. Cp. the title of Ps. ix. It is useless to speculate whether 'the hind of the morning' in this song meant literally the hind bestirring itself, or hunted, in the early morning, or figuratively, the morning dawn. The phrase is used in the Talmud for the first rays of the dawn, "like two horns of light ascending from the east," but this later use can hardly determine its meaning here.

Explanations which regard the phrase as descriptive of the contents of the Psalm: e.g. the hind as an emblem of persecuted innocence, the dawn as an emblem of deliverance:- must be rejected as contrary to the analogy of other titles.

The LXX renders, *concerning the help that cometh in the morning*, explaining *ayyéleth* by the similar word *eyaulth* (*strength* or *succour*) in *v.* 19. The Targum connects it with the morning sacrifice, and paraphrases *concerning the virtue of the continual morning sacrifice.*

1–10. The pleading cry of the forsaken and persecuted servant of God.

1. The expostulation of astonishment and perplexity, not a demand for explanation. Faith and despair are wrestling in the Psalmist's mind. Faith can still claim God as 'my God,' and does not cease its prayers; despair thinks itself forsaken. So Zion in her exile said, "Jehovah hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me" (Is. xlix. 14). Cp. xiii. 1, lxxxviii. 14. *God* is *Él*, and so in *v.* 10. Cp. lxiii. 1, and note on v. 4.

Christ upon the Cross used the Aramaic version of these words, for Aramaic was His mother tongue. *Eli* (Matt. xxvii. 46) is the Hebrew word, retained in the present text of the Targum: *Eláhi* (Mark xv. 34) the Aramaic. The best MSS. have *Eloi* in Matt. also.

Why art thou so *far* &c.] The alternative rendering in R.V. marg., *far from my help are the words of my roaring*, follows the construction adopted by the LXX, Vulg., and Jer. But it is harsh, even if *my help* (or *my salvation*) is taken to mean God Himself (xxxv. 3): and the rendering in the text appears to give the sense correctly. Cp. x. 1; and *vv.* 11, 19.

my roaring] The groaning of the sufferer in his distress is compared to the lion's roar. Cp. xxxii. 3; xxxviii. 8.

2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not;
And in the night season, and am not silent.
3 But thou *art* holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of
Israel.
4 Our fathers trusted in thee:
They trusted, and thou didst deliver them.
5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered:
They trusted in thee, and were not confounded.
6 But I *am* a worm, and no man;

2. *thou hearest not*] R.V., **thou answerest not.**

and am not silent] Better as R.V. marg., **but find no rest:** no answer comes to bring me respite.

3. An appeal to God's moral character, as the Holy One of Israel. The Heb. word for *holy* is derived from a root signifying *separation*. It characterises God negatively, as separate from the limitations and imperfections of the world and man; and positively, it comes to express the essential nature of God in its moral aspect, as pure, righteous, faithful, supremely exalted. In virtue of His holiness he cannot be false to His covenant. Cp. Habakkuk's plea (i. 12); and for another side of the truth, Is. v. 16.

O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel] Rather as R.V. marg., **O thou that art enthroned upon the praises of Israel**: a bold adaptation of the phrase *that sittest enthroned upon the cherubim* (2 Sam. vi. 2; 2 Kings xix. 15; Ps. lxxx. 1; xcix. 1). The praises of Israel, ascending like clouds of incense, form as it were the throne upon which Jehovah sits. They are a perpetual memorial of His mighty acts in times past (Ex. xv. 11; Ps. lxxviii. 4; Is. lxiii. 7); and surely He cannot have ceased to give occasion for those praises (*v.* 25)! The P.B.V. is based on an untenable construction of the words, in its rendering, *And thou continuest holy, O thou worship of Israel*, and it takes *praises of Israel* to mean God Himself as the object of Israel's praises.

4, 5. The thought of the preceding line is developed in an appeal to the past history of the nation. Cp. xliv. 1, lxxviii. 3, ix. 10. 'Thou didst deliver them: why then am I deserted?' The emphasis is throughout on **thee.**

In thee did our fathers trust:
They trusted, and thou didst deliver them.
Unto thee did they cry, and escaped:
In thee did they trust, and were not put to shame.

6, 7. The contrast of his own lot.

6. *a worm*] Trampled under foot, despised, defenceless. Almost every word of this verse finds a parallel in the second part of Isaiah. Jehovah's servant Israel is there called a worm (xli. 14); and the ideal representative of Israel is one whom men despise (xlix. 7, liii. 3); from whom they shrink with horror as scarcely human (lii. 14, liii. 2, 3). Comp. too li. 7.

A reproach of men, and despised of the people.
All they that see me laugh me to scorn:
They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*,
He trusted on the LORD *that* he would deliver him:
Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.
But thou *art* he that took me out of the womb:
Thou didst make me hope *when I was* upon my mother's breasts.
I was cast upon thee from the womb:
Thou *art* my God from my mother's belly.

the people] Or, people, generally; those with whom he is brought in contact.

7. *laugh me to scorn*] LXX. ἐξεμυκτήρισαν, the word used by St Luke (xxiii. 35) of the rulers scoffing at Christ. They gape with their lips (Job xvi. 10; Ps. xxxv. 21); they shake the head (cix. 25; Lam. ii. 15; Job xvi. 4), gestures partly of contempt, partly of feigned abhorrence. Comp. Matt. xxvii. 39.

8. **'Roll it upon Jehovah! let him deliver him:**
Let him rescue him, for he delighteth in him.'

Ironically they bid the sufferer 'roll' i.e. commit his cause to Jehovah. The verb is certainly imperative, as in xxxvii. 5; Prov. xvi. 3; though the Versions all give the perfect tense, and the words are quoted in that form in Matt. xxvii. 43. Usage makes it certain that the subject in the last clause is Jehovah, as in xviii. 19.

There is a remarkable parallel to this passage in Wisdom ii. 16 ff. The ungodly say of the righteous man: "He maketh his boast that God is his Father. Let us see if his words be true, and let us prove what shall happen in the end of him. For if the just man be the son of God, he will help him, and deliver him from the hand of his enemies." The whole passage is worth comparing.

9. *But thou* art *he*] Rather, Yea, thou art he. The mocking words of his enemies are true, and he turns them into a plea. All his past life has proved Jehovah's love. Cp. lxxi. 5, 6.

thou didst make me hope] Rather, that didst make me trust. (cp. *vv.* 4, 5). The marg., *keptest me in safety*, lit. *didst make me lie securely upon my mother's breasts*, is a less probable rendering. The P.B.V. *my hope* follows LXX, Vulg., Jer., which represent a slightly different reading.

10. Upon thee have I been cast &c. *Upon thee* stands first emphatically. Cp. *vv.* 4, 5. To THY care have I been entrusted from my birth. Cp. lv. 22; lxxi. 6. There does not seem to be any reference to the practice of placing a new born infant upon its father's knees, as much as to say, Thou didst adopt me.

11—21. The Psalmist pleads for help with intenser earnestness. The virulence of his foes increases. Strength and endurance are exhausted.

11 Be not far from me; for trouble *is* near;
For *there is* none to help.
12 Many bulls have compassed me:
Strong *bulls* of Bashan have beset me round.
13 They gaped upon me *with* their mouths,
As a ravening and a roaring lion.
14 I am poured out like water,
And all my bones are out of joint:
My heart is like wax;
It is melted in the midst of my bowels.
15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd;
And my tongue cleaveth *to* my jaws;
And thou hast brought me into the dust of death.
16 For dogs have compassed me:
The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me:

11. *Be not far from me*] The expostulation of *v.* 1 is turned into a prayer, again repeated in *v.* 19. He urges his plea on the double ground that while Jehovah still stands afar off in seeming indifference, distress is close at hand, and there is no other helper to whom he can look.

12. He compares his insolent enemies to wanton bulls, which "are in the habit of gathering in a circle round any novel or unaccustomed object, and may easily be irritated into charging with their horns" (Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 71). *Bashan* is here used in a wide sense for the district from the Jabbok to the spurs of Hermon, including part of Gilead. It was famous for its rich pastures (Num. xxxii. 1 ff.; Deut. xxxii. 14; Amos iv. 1).

13. *They gaped* &c.] R.V., they gape upon me with their mouths (Lam. ii. 16, iii. 46): like a lion roaring as it prepares to spring upon its prey (vii. 2).

14—17. The effects of anxiety and persecution. Vital strength and courage fail; his frame is racked and tortured; he is reduced to a skeleton.

14. Cp. Josh. vii. 5; Ps. vi. 2 ff. It is the experience of the dying man. Cp. Newman's *Dream of Gerontius*,

> "This emptying out of each constituent
> And natural force, whereby I come to be."

15. The vital sap and moisture of the body are dried up. Cp. xxxii. 4. Possibly for *my strength* we should read *my palate*. Cp. lxix. 3.

thou hast brought me] Thou art laying me. Even in this persecution he can recognise the hand of God. His tormentors are Jehovah's instruments. Cp. Acts ii. 23.

16. A fresh description of his foes. An unclean, cowardly, worrying rabble, like the troops of hungry and half-savage dogs with which

They pierced my hands and my feet.
I may tell all my bones: 17
They look *and* stare upon me.
They part my garments among them, 18
And cast lots upon my vesture.
But be not thou far *from me*, O LORD: 19
O my strength, haste thee to help me.

every oriental city and village still abound (Tristram, *Nat. Hist.* p. 79), come thronging round him: a gang of miscreants have hemmed him in.

They pierced my hands and my feet] The figure of the savage dogs is still continued. They fly at his feet and hands, and maim them.

The A.V. here rightly deserts the Massoretic text in favour of the reading represented by the LXX. Vulg., and Syr., which have, *they dug*, or, *pierced*. Another group of ancient Versions (Aq. Symm. Jer.) gives *they bound*. (*Pierced* in some editions of Jerome is a corruption for the true reading *pinxerunt*.) The Massoretic text has, *like a lion my hands and my feet*. A verb *did they mangle* must be supplied, but the construction is harsh and the sense unsatisfactory. It seems certain that a somewhat rare verb form כארו (*ka'ĕrū*), 'they pierced,' has been corrupted into the similar word כארי (*ka'ărī*), 'like a lion.' The Targum perhaps preserves a trace of the transition in its conflate rendering, *biting like a lion*.

The literal fulfilment in the Crucifixion is obvious. But it is nowhere referred to in the N.T.

17. *I may tell*] i.e. I can count. He is reduced to a living skeleton. Cp. Job xxxiii. 21.

they look &c.] While they—they gaze &c. The original expresses the malicious delight with which these [illegible] of cruelty feast their eyes upon the sorry spectacle.

18. His brutal enemies are only waiting for his death that they may strip his body, and divide his clothes between them. Already they are settling their respective shares. This is a simpler explanation than to suppose that the Psalmist represents himself as a prisoner stripped and led out to execution, or as [illegible] and plundered by robbers (Job xxiv. 7—10; Mic. ii. 8). It need not be supposed that this actually happened to the Psalmist. The language is perhaps proverbial. But it was literally fulfilled in the circumstances of the Crucifixion (John xix. 23, 24; cp. Matt. xxvii. 35, where, however, the reference to the prophecy in the Received Text is an interpolation).

and cast lots &c.] R.V., and upon my vesture do they cast lots. The inner garment, the "seamless tunic," which would be spoilt by rending.

19. The prayer for help is repeated after this description of the urgency of his need. But thou, O LORD (in emphatic contrast to they in v. 17), keep not thou far off. The sufferer looks away from his numerous tormentors and fixes his gaze upon Jehovah.

O my strength] R.V., O thou my succour.

20 Deliver my soul from the sword;
My darling from the power of the dog.
21 Save me from the lion's mouth:
For thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren:
In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

20. *from the sword*] From a violent death.

my darling] Lit., *my only one*. The clue to the meaning is given by the use of the word of *an only child* (Gen. xxii. 2; Jud. xi. 34). The word denotes the one precious life which can never be replaced. Cp. xxxv. 17.

the dog] See on *v.* 16.

21. *for thou hast heard me* &c.] Rather, yea from the horns of the wild oxen thou hast answered me. A singularly bold and forcible construction. We expect a second imperative, restating the prayer for deliverance (*rescue thou me:* cp. Jer. *exaudi*). But the conviction that his prayer is heard, nay, answered, flashes upon the Psalmist's soul; prayer is changed into assurance, joyous confidence takes the place of petition. Less forcible is the explanation which assumes a pregnant rather than a broken construction:—*From the horns of the wild oxen thou hast answered* and delivered *me.*

unicorns] The rendering of LXX, Vulg., Jer. But the *re'ēm* was certainly a two-horned animal (Deut. xxxiii. 17, R.V.). The Auerochs or wild ox (*Bos primigenius*), now everywhere extinct, is almost certainly the animal meant. Its strength and untamableness are described in Job xxxix. 9 ff. See Tristram's *Nat. Hist.* p. 146 ff.

22—31. Convinced that his prayer is heard, the Psalmist breaks forth with resolutions of public thanksgiving (22—26); and the glorious prospect of Jehovah's universal kingdom opens up before him (27—31). "*Thou answerest not*" (*v.* 2) is the key-note of *vv.* 1—21; "*Thou hast answered me* of *vv.* 22—31". (Cheyne).

22. *thy name*] All that Thou hast proved thyself to be. See note on v. 11.

my brethren] By the ties of national and religious sympathy. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (ii. 12) puts these words directly into the mouth of Christ, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

in the midst of the congregation] Gratitude demands the most public proclamation of Jehovah's lovingkindness. It concerns all the faithful to know what He has wrought, and all the faithful must join in thanksgiving for the deliverance vouchsafed to their fellow and representative. Cp. xl. 9, 10; xxxv. 18.

will I praise thee] Now he can contribute his share to the praises which form Jehovah's throne (*v.* 3). *Praise* is four times repeated in *vv.* 22—26.

Ye that fear the LORD, praise him;
All ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him;
And fear him, all ye seed of Israel.
For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Neither hath he hid his face from him;
But when he cried unto him, he heard.
My praise *shall be* of thee in the great congregation:
I will pay my vows before them that fear him.
The meek shall eat and be satisfied:

23 24. Already he can imagine himself standing 'in the great congregation.' These are the words in which he summons them to praise.

23. *ye that fear the* LORD] Possibly coextensive with *the seed of Jacob*, but pointing rather to the inner circle of true believers who are in fullest sympathy with the Psalmist. See note on cxv. 11.

seed of Jacob...seed of Israel] Cp. Is. xlv. 19, 25.

fear him] R.V., stand in awe of Him (xxxiii. 8).

24. *For he hath not despised* as men do (*v.* 6) *nor abhorred* as something loathsome and abominable (Is. xlix. 7, though the word here is even stronger) *the affliction of the afflicted*. Cp. lxix. 33. The 'servant of Jehovah' (Is. xli. 4, 7) and Zion's future king (Zech. ix. 9) are both described as 'afflicted.' See note on ix. 12.

hid his face] In anger (x. 11, xiii. 1); or abhorrence (Is. liii. 3, R.V.).

25. *My praise shall be of thee*] Rather as R.V., Of thee cometh my praise. From his fellow-worshippers the Psalmist turns to Jehovah, who is not only the object but the source of his praise. "It is the LORD's doing."

I will pay my vows] Thank-offerings vowed in the time of trouble. Cp. lxvi. 13, cxvi. 14, 18.

26. *The meek shall eat and be satisfied*] The flesh of a sacrifice offered in performance of a vow was to be eaten on the same day on which it was offered, or on the morrow (Lev. vii. 16; Num. xv. 3). The Psalmist will invite the meek to join him in this eucharistic meal. Such an invitation is not indeed prescribed in the Law, but it is in full accordance with the command to invite the poor and needy to share in the tithes (Deut. xiv. 29, xxvi. 12; where the phrase 'eat and be satisfied' occurs), and in the harvest festivals (Deut. xvi. 11, 14). There seems to be no good reason for supposing that the words are to be understood wholly in a figurative and spiritual sense, though on the other hand their meaning is not to be limited to the external performance of a ritual ceremony. At any rate the language of this and the preceding verse is based upon the idea of a sacrifice of thanksgiving of which the worshippers partook (xxiii. 5). 'Eat and be satisfied' is not merely a current formula for the refreshment which

They shall praise the LORD that seek him:
Your heart shall live for ever.
27 All the ends of the *world* shall remember and turn unto the
LORD:
And all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before
thee.
28 For the kingdom *is* the LORD'S:
And *he is* the governor among the nations.

flows from Divine blessing, the Psalmist anticipating that his own deliverance will lead to the prosperity of all the godly.

that seek him] R.V., that seek after him. All Jehovah's devoted followers (see on xxiv. 6) will swell the anthem.

your heart shall live &c.] R.V., let your heart live for ever. The entertainer invokes a blessing on his guests. May those who were ready to perish be revived and quickened with an undying energy! With the whole verse cp. lxix. 32.

If the primary and immediate reference is to a sacrificial feast, it is clear that the words reach far beyond the outward rite to the spiritual communion of which it was the symbol; while the Christian reader cannot but see the counterpart and fulfilment of the words in the Holy Eucharist.

27—31. The Psalmist's hopes take a wider range, extending to all mankind and to future ages. He anticipates the time when not he alone, not the seed of Israel only, but all nations to earth's remotest bound, will pay homage to Jehovah. From personal hopes he passes to national hopes, from national hopes to universal hopes, reaching forward into the future from generation to generation. But this establishment of Jehovah's kingdom is not explicitly regarded as the fruit of the Psalmist's sufferings. We are not yet upon the level of Isaiah liii. Perhaps the nations are represented as being attracted by Jehovah's deliverance of His servant, though even this is not clear.

27. *All the ends of the world*] R.V., of the earth. The remotest countries. Cp. lxvii. 7; xcviii. 3.

shall remember &c.] There was a knowledge of God, to which the nations might attain through the witness of His works without and the witness of conscience within. But they 'forgot Him' (ix. 17) and turned away from Him to idols of their own imagination (Rom. i. 21, 28). But one day they will 'remember' and 'return.' Cp. Jer. xvi. 19 ff.

and the kindreds of the nations] All the families of the nations; realising the patriarchal promise (Gen. xii. 3; xxviii. 14).

28. The reason for this homage. It is but the recognition of the present fact of Jehovah's universal sovereignty. Cp. Obad. 21; Ps. xciii. 1; xcvi. 10; xcvii. 1; Zech. xiv. 16, 17.

and he is *the governor* &c.] R.V., and he is the ruler over the nations. Cp. lxvi. 7; ciii. 19.

All *they that be* fat upon earth shall eat and worship: 29
All they that go down to the dust shall bow before him:
And none can keep alive his own soul.
A seed shall serve him; 30
It shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

29. A most obscure verse. The first line (according to the present text) may be rendered literally,

All earth's fat ones have eaten and worshipped.

The tense is a 'prophetic perfect'; with the eye of faith the Psalmist sees homage already paid to Jehovah even by the haughty nobles of the earth. They abandon their proud self-sufficiency, and join in the eucharistic meal with the meek (*v.* 26), whom once they despised and persecuted. Then he continues

Before him bow all that were going down to the dust,
Yea he who could not keep his soul alive.

Those who were on the edge of the grave, ready to die from want and misery and trouble, come as guests and gain new life. Rich and poor, strong and weak, alike partake of the feast: for it the rich desert their wealth; in it the poor receive the compensation of their privations; and those who were ready to die find life. Cp. Is. xxv. 6—8.

This seems to be the best explanation of the text as it stands; but it is open to serious objections. The reference to the sacrificial meal is very abrupt; the sense given to 'those that go down to the dust' is questionable; and the last line drags heavily at the end of the verse.

Others suppose that the contrast intended is not between rich and poor, but between the living and the dead. 'Earth's fat ones' are those in the full vigour of life: *eat* means simply 'enjoy life': *all they that have gone down into the dust* are the dead. Quick and dead bow in homage before the universal sovereign. Cp. Phil. ii. 10. Attractive as this explanation is, the idea is foreign to the O. T. See cxv. 17; Is. xxxviii. 18; and Introd. p. lxxv, ff.

But the text is not improbably corrupt. An easy emendation, adopted by several critics, simplifies the first line thus:

Surely him shall all earth's fat ones worship,

and the second line repeats the thought,

Before him shall bow all they that must go down to the dust.

Earth's mightiest are but mortals and must yield their homage to the King of kings. Then the last line should be joined to the next verse thus:

And as for him that could not keep his soul alive,
His seed shall serve Him.

The Psalmist and those who like him were at the point of death will leave a posterity behind them to serve Jehovah. The reading indicated by the LXX. *But my soul liveth unto him, my seed shall serve him,* suits the context less well.

30. *It shall be accounted* &c.] i.e. as R.V. marg., *It shall be counted unto the Lord for* his *generation.* Better, however, as R.V. text, It

31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness
Unto a people that *shall be* born, that he hath done *this*.

shall be told of the Lord unto the *next* generation. But here again it seems best slightly to alter the text, and following the LXX to connect the first word of *v.* 31 with *v.* 30: *It shall be told of the Lord unto the generation that shall come:* for (1) *the generation* needs the qualification which R.V. supplies by inserting *next:* and (2) *they shall come* absolutely in the sense of *they shall come into being* is doubtful.

31. *and shall &c.*] And they shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born; i.e. to the next generation. From one generation to another the tradition of Jehovah's righteousness, of His faithfulness to His covenant, will be handed down.

that he hath done this] Or as R.V., that he hath done it. The object is not expressed. Cp. xxxvii. 5 (which combines *vv.* 8 and 31): lii. 9; cxix. 126; Is. xliv. 23; Num. xxiii. 19, 23. "Gen. xxviii. 15 unites the first and last lines of the Psalm." *Kay.* He has wrought out His purpose of salvation, interposed on His servant's behalf, proved Himself the living righteous and true God.

The song of praise, begun by the Psalmist (*v.* 22), is taken up by Israel; all the nations of the earth swell the chorus: and the strain echoes on through all the ages. So gloriously ends the Psalm which began in the darkest sorrow. *Per crucem ad lucem.* It is a parable of the history of the individual, of Israel, of the Church, of the world.

PSALM XXIII.

The grateful praise of Jehovah (i) as the Good Shepherd who tends (*vv.* 1, 2), and guides (*vv.* 3, 4) the Psalmist, providing for every want, and protecting him in every danger: (ii) as the bountiful host (*vv.* 5, 6), who entertains the Psalmist as his guest with gracious liberality.

The Psalm is unrivalled for calm serenity and perfect faith. Under Jehovah's loving care the Psalmist knows neither want nor fear. His words admit of the most universal application to all needs, temporal and spiritual, in every age. Their meaning grows in depth as the love of God is more fully revealed through the teaching of the Spirit in the experience of life (Eph. iii. 17—19: Rom. viii. 35 ff.).

The Targum explains the Psalm of God's care for the nation of Israel. This however, though justifiable as a secondary application, can hardly be the original meaning. Its tone is strongly personal. It is an individual realisation and appropriation of the blessings involved in the covenant-relation of Jehovah to His people. Each sheep can claim the care which is promised to the whole flock (Luke xv. 4 ff.).

Was David the author? Many have thought that *vv.* 1—4 are based on the recollections of his early shepherd life; and that *v.* 5 reflects his entertainment by Barzillai (2 Sam. xvii. 27—29). Nor is *v.* 6 decisive against the Davidic authorship. The language is figurative, and the phrase 'house of the LORD' does not necessarily imply the existence of

the temple (Ex. xxiii. 19: Jud. xviii. 31; 1 Sam. i. 7), though it must be admitted that it seems to point to it.

The kindred Ps. xxvii should be carefully compared.

A Psalm of David.

The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want. 23 1
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters. 2
He restoreth my soul: 3
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

1. *The* LORD *is my shepherd*] How natural a figure in a pastoral country, and for the shepherd-king, if the Psalm is his! Jehovah is often spoken of as the Shepherd of Israel, and Israel as the flock, especially in the Psalms of Asaph. See lxxiv. 1, lxxvii. 20, lxxviii. 52, 70 ff.; lxxix. 13; lxxx. 1, and cp. xcv. 7, c. 3; Mic. vii. 14; and the exquisite description of Jehovah's care for the returning exiles in Is. xl. 11. Jacob speaks of "the God who shepherded me" (Gen. xlviii. 15, cp. xlix. 24). The title of shepherd is also applied to rulers and in particular to David (2 Sam. v. 2, vii. 7); and to the future king of whom David was a type (Mic. v. 4; Ez. xxxiv. 23); and so Christ appropriates it to Himself (John x. 1; cp. Heb. xiii. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 25).

I shall not want] The language, partly of experience in the present, partly of confidence for the future. So of Israel, looking back on the wandering in the wilderness, "thou hast lacked nothing" (Deut. ii. 7); and looking forward to the Land of Promise, "thou shalt not lack anything in it" (Deut. viii. 9). Cp. Ps. xxxiv. 10, lxxxiv. 11.

2. The figure of the shepherd is expanded. He makes his flock lie down in the noontide heat (Cant. i. 7) *in pastures of tender grass*. For this picture of the shepherd's care cp. Jer. xxxiii. 12.

He leadeth me] The word suggests the idea of *gentle guidance* (Is. xl. 11); sometimes of sustaining and providing (Gen. xlvii. 17 R.V. marg.) So here Vulg. *educavit*. It is specially applied to God's guidance of His people (Ex. xv. 13; Ps. xxxi. 3; Is. xlix. 10).

the still waters] Lit. *waters of rest*: not gently-flowing streams, but streams where they may find rest and refreshment (Is. xxxii. 18). So Jerome: *super aquas refectionis*. The Promised Land was to be Israel's rest (Deut. xii. 9; Ps. xcv. 11). It will be remembered that "the eastern shepherd never *drives*, but always leads his sheep," and that "in the East the sheep requires water daily, owing to the heat and dryness of the climate." Tristram's *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, pp. 140, 141.

With *vv.* 1, 2 comp. Rev. vii. 17.

3, 4. **The shepherd's care as guide and guardian.**

3. *He restoreth my soul*] Renews and sustains my life. Cp. xix. 7, note. Not as P.B.V. (after the LXX and Vulg.) *shall convert my soul*.

he leadeth me] R.V., he guideth me: a word often used of God's

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of
death,
I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me;
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine
enemies:

guidance of His people collectively (Ex. xv. 13; Deut. xxxii. 12), and individually (Ps. v. 8, xxvii. 11, &c.).

in the paths of righteousness] Usage is decisive in favour of rendering thus, and not, *in straight paths*. The word for *righteousness* nowhere retains its primary physical meaning of *straightness*. For *paths* cp. xvii. 5; and for the whole phrase, Prov. iv. 11, viii. 20, xii. 28.

for his name's sake] In order to prove Himself such as He has declared Himself to be (Ex. xxxiv. 5 ff.).

4. The figure of the shepherd is still continued. "The sheep districts [in Palestine] consist of wide open wolds or downs, rift here and there by deep ravines, in whose sides lurks many a wild beast, the enemy of the flocks" (Tristram, *Nat. Hist.* p. 138). Even in such a dismal glen, where unknown perils are the least, where deathly gloom and horror are on every side, he knows no fear. Cp. Jeremiah's description of Jehovah's care for Israel in the wilderness (ii. 6). Bunyan's development of [illegible] in the *Pilgrim's Progress* is familiar to everyone.

the shadow of death] The word *tsalmāveth* is thus rendered in the Ancient Versions, and the present vocalization assumes that this is its meaning. But compounds are rare in Hebrew except in proper names, and there are good grounds for supposing that the word is derived from a different root and should be read *tsalmūth* and explained simply *deep gloom* (cp. R.V. marg.). It is not improbable that the pronunciation of the word was altered at an early date in accordance with a popular etymology (like our *causeway*, originally *causey*, from Fr. *chaussée*).

for thou art *with me*] God's presence is His people's strength and comfort. Cp. Gen. xxviii. 15; Josh. i. 5 ff.; &c. &c.

Thy rod and thy staff] The shepherd's crook is poetically described by two names, as the *rod* or club with which he defends his sheep from attack (Mic. vii. 14; 2 Sam. xxiii. 21; Ps. ii. 9); and the *staff* on which he leans. The shepherd walks before his flock, ready to protect them from assault; they follow gladly and fearlessly wherever he leads.

5, 6. The figure is changed. Jehovah is now described as the host who bountifully entertains the Psalmist at His palace, and provides him with a lodging in his own house, as Oriental monarchs entertained those to whom they wished to shew special favour. See Gen. xliii. 16; 2 Sam. ix. 7 ff., xix. 33; 1 Kings iv. 27.

5. *in the presence of mine enemies*] Or, adversaries, as in vi. 7. The mark of favour is public and unmistakable.

Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of 6
my life:
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Thou anointest] R.V., thou hast anointed. The reference is to the unguents and perfumes which were the regular accompaniment of an Oriental banquet (Amos vi. 6; Ps. xlv. 7, xcii. 10), not to the regal anointing, for which a different word is used.

my cup &c.] See note on xvi. 5: and cp. xxxvi. 8, lxvi. 12, note.

Jehovah is no niggard host, like the Pharisee (Luke vii. 46); He provides for the body as well as the necessaries of life (John ii. 1–11); His guest shall be of a cheerful countenance and a gladsome heart (civ. 15).

6. *Surely*] Or, as R.V. marg., only. Nothing but goodness and mercy *shall pursue me*. What a contrast to the lot of the wicked man, pursued by the angels of judgment (xxxv. 6), hunted by calamity (cxl. 11).

And I will dwell] The text as it stands would mean, *and I will return* [to dwell] *in the house of the* LORD. But a comparison of xxvii. 4 leaves no doubt that we should read *eshēbh* or regard *shabhtī* as an exceptional form for it, and explain, *and my dwelling shall be* &c. Clearly the words are to be understood figuratively, and not of actual residence within the precincts of the temple. Cp. xxxvi. 8.

for ever] Lit. *for length of days*. The blessing of long life (xxi. 4) is exchanged for the still greater blessing of the closest intimacy and fellowship with God.

PSALM XXIV.

The impregnable stronghold of Zion had fallen. David was master of his future capital. But it was not in his own strength, not for his own glory, that the victory had been won. The city of David was to be "the city of the Lord of Hosts." Its true owner and King must now enter and take possession. The Ark, which was the symbol of His Presence, must be solemnly brought up and installed in the tent which David had prepared for it. For that unique occasion, the greatest day in David's life (see Stanley's *Jewish Church*, Lect. xvi.), this Psalm appears to have been written. Jehovah comes as a victorious warrior, fresh from the conquest of the impregnable fortress (vv. 7–10). The opening assertion of His universal sovereignty as the Creator of the world offers a fitting caution not to suppose that because He has chosen one city for His special dwelling-place, His Presence and activity are limited to it (vv. 1, 2); the inquiry what must be the character of His worshippers (vv. 3–6), appropriate in any case, gains fresh point in view of the disaster which had for a while deferred the ceremony (2 Sam. vi. 9). The "ancient doors" are the gates of the venerable fortress, now opening to receive their true Lord.

No other occasion, such as the Dedication of the Temple, or the return of the Ark from some victory, explains the whole Psalm equally well.

Some commentators have questioned the original unity of the poem. On the ground of difference in tone and style, and supposed want of coherence, they have maintained that *vv.* 1–6 are taken from a poem of a didactic character, *vv.* 7–10, from a triumphal ode. The variety of style is not however greater than might be expected from the change of subject, and a clear sequence of thought can be traced in the three stanzas of the Psalm.

i. The introductory verses declare the Majesty of Him Who comes to take possession (*vv.* 1, 2).

ii. The conditions of access to His sanctuary are determined (*vv.* 3—6).

iii. The ancient fortress is summoned to admit its true king, and the character of His sovereignty is proclaimed (*vv.* 7—10).

The musical performance of the Psalm probably corresponded to its dramatic character, though the precise arrangement can only be conjectured.

vv. 1—6 were perhaps intended to be sung as the procession mounted the hill; *vv.* 1, 2 by the full choir, the question of *v.* 3 as a solo, the answer of *vv.* 4, 5 as another solo, the response of *v.* 6 in chorus. *vv.* 7—10 may have been sung as the procession halted before the venerable gates of the citadel: the summons of *v.* 7 and *v.* 9 by a single voice (or possibly by the choir), the challenge of *v.* 8*a* and *v.* 10*a* by a voice as from the gates, the triumphant response of *v.* 8*b* and *v.* 10*b* by the full choir.

According to the title in the LXX, which agrees with the liturgical use of the Jewish Church as prescribed in the Talmud, this was the Psalm for the first day of the week. See Introd. p. xxvii.

It is fitly used as a Proper Psalm for Ascension Day.

Psalms xv and lxviii should be compared.

A Psalm of David.

24 The earth *is* the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof;
The world, and they that dwell therein.

1, 2. The unique Majesty of Him Who comes to take possession of His chosen dwelling-place. His sovereignty is not limited to a single nation or a single country. He is the Lord of all the world, for He is its Creator.

1. *The earth* is *the LORD'S*] Better, Unto Jehovah belongeth the earth. The natural order of the Heb. fixes the reader's mind first on Him, Whose approach is the theme of the Psalm. For the same thought see Ex. xix. 5; Deut. x. 14 (R.V.); Ps. l. 12, lxxxix. 11. The words are quoted (from the LXX) in 1 Cor. x. 26, to confirm the intrinsic lawfulness of eating whatever is sold in the market.

the world] Properly, the habitable part of the earth (ix. 8); hence naturally supplemented by the mention of its inhabitants. The P.B.V., *the compass of the world*, was probably suggested by the Vulg., *orbis terrarum*.

For he hath founded it upon the seas, 2
And established it upon the floods.
Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? 3
And who shall stand in his holy place?
He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; 4
Who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity,
Nor sworn deceitfully.

2. *For he* &c.] HE is emphatic. It is HE and no other who laid the foundation of the world (civ. 5; Job xxxviii. 4). The land rising out of the water is supposed to rest upon it. Cp. cxxxvi. 6; and the idea of the subterranean abyss of waters in Gen. vii. 11; and "the water under the earth" in Ex. xx. 4. It is a popular or poetic conception derived from phenomena; yet possibly the idea that the earth was firmly fixed upon such a foundation suggested the Creator's power much in the same way as the suspension and motion of the earth in space may do to us.

3—6. The moral conditions required for access to the presence of so great a God. His Holiness corresponds to His Majesty. Ps. xv. 1 ff. and Is. xxxiii. 14 ff. are parallel in substance as well as form.

3. *Who shall ascend*] Often of going up to worship at the sanctuary. See 1 Sam. i. 3, 22; Is. ii. 3, xxxvii. 14, xxxviii. 22.

stand] Not merely appear or remain, but as in i. 5, stand his ground. Cp. 1 Sam. vi. 20.

in his holy place] Synonymous with '*the hill* (or, *mountain*) *of the* LORD' in the preceding line. Cp. ii. 6, iii. 4, xv. 1, xliii. 3; Is. ii. 2, 3, &c.

4. *He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart*] He who is innocent of violence and wrong-doing (xviii. 20, 24); nay, innocent even in thought and purpose as well as in deed. Cp. lxxiii. 1; Matt. v. 8.

Who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity] i.e. who is true and faithful to Jehovah. 'To lift up the soul' means to direct the mind towards (xxv. 1), to set the heart upon (Deut. xxiv. 15), to desire (Hos. iv. 8). 'Vanity' denotes what is transitory (Job xv. 31), false and unreal (Ps. xii. 2), or sinful (Is. v. 18), and may even designate false gods (Ps. xxxi. 6). It includes all that is unlike or opposed to the nature of God. The traditional reading (*Qrē*) however is, *my soul* (so too Cod. Alex. of the LXX.). This reading must be rendered, *Who hath not taken me in vain*. God speaks; and the words are an echo of Ex. xx. 7, with *my soul* (=my being) substituted for *my name*. But this explanation is forced, and cannot be defended even by Am. vi. 8, and Jer. li. 14, where God is said to swear 'by His soul'= by Himself.

nor sworn deceitfully] R.V., and hath not sworn deceitfully. The paraphrase of P.B.V., 'nor sworn to deceive his neighbour,' which follows the LXX and Vulg., gives the sense rightly. He has been true to his neighbour, as well as to God. Cp. xv. 4.

5 He shall receive the blessing from the LORD,
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.
6 This *is* the generation of them that seek him,
That seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.
7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors;
And the King of glory shall come in.
8 Who *is* this King of glory?

5. *the blessing*] R.V. rightly, **a blessing.**

righteousness] 'Righteousness' is blessing in another aspect. Jehovah manifests Himself to the godly man, as 'the God of his salvation' (xxv. 5; xxvii. 9); and this 'salvation' is the witness to and reward for his upright conduct. See 1 Sam. xxvi. 23; Ps. xviii. 20, 24; lviii. 11. In the light of N.T. revelation the words receive a deeper meaning. See Matt. v. 6.

6. *generation*] i.e. class, as in xii. 7; xiv. 5; lxxiii. 15.

that seek him] R.V., that seek after him. Two words for *seek* are used in this verse. Both may be used of the outward act of visiting the sanctuary; but both come to express the inward purpose of the heart as well. So far as the two words can be distinguished the first denotes the attitude of loving devotion, the second that of inquiry or supplication.

O Jacob] The A.V. marg. and R.V. rightly follow the LXX., Vulg., and Syr. in reading **O God of Jacob.** If the Massoretic text is retained, it must be rendered with R.V. marg., *That seek thy face*, even *Jacob*. These are the ideal Jacob, the true people of God. But the construction is harsh; a vocative is needed after *thy face;* and *Jacob* does not by itself convey this sense.

7—10. The procession has reached the ancient gates of Zion. They are summoned to open high and wide to admit their true King.

7. *Lift up your heads*] As though they were too low and mean for the entrance of "the high and lofty one" who comes, and in token that all resistance is at an end.

ye everlasting doors] Or, *ye ancient doors*, venerable with unknown antiquity.

and the King &c.] Or, **that the King of glory may come in.** The Ark, "which is called by the Name, even the name of the LORD of hosts that sitteth upon the cherubim" (2 Sam. vi. 2) was the symbol of Jehovah's majesty and the pledge of His Presence among His people (Num. x. 35, 36). When the ark was lost, "the glory departed from Israel" (1 Sam. iv. 21). Cp. xix. 1, note.

8. Who is the King of glory? may be merely a rhetorical question; but it is far more poetical to suppose that the gates, or the warders, are represented as challenging the comer's right to enter. The choir's response recalls the opening words of the Song of Moses (Ex. xv. 2, 3), "Jah is my strength and song...Jehovah is a man of war:" while the title *King* reflects its closing words (Ex. xv. 18); "Jehovah shall be

The LORD strong and mighty,
The LORD mighty *in* battle.
Lift up your heads, O ye gates; 9
Even lift *them* up, ye everlasting doors;
And the King of glory shall come in.
Who is this King of glory? 10
The LORD of hosts, he *is* the King of glory. Selah.

King for ever and ever." He is now proclaimed as the Victor, who comes as He had purposed, to take His kingdom.

9. 10. Challenge and response are repeated, with some slight variations, and one important change.

9. *even lift* &c.] Yea, lift them up ..that the King of glory may come in.

10. *The LORD of hosts*] The climax is reached. He claims to enter, not merely as a victorious warrior, but as the Sovereign of the Universe. The great title *Yhwah Tsebâôth* or *LORD of hosts*, which was characteristic of the regal and prophetic period, meets us here for the first time in the Psalter. Originally perhaps it designated Jehovah as "the God of the armies of Israel" (1 Sam. xvii. 45), who went forth with His people's hosts to battle (xliv. 9; lx. 10), and whose Presence was the source of victory (xlvi. 7, 11). But as the phrase "host of heaven" was used for the celestial bodies (Gen. ii. 1), and celestial beings (1 Kings xxii. 19), the meaning of the title was enlarged to designate Jehovah as the ruler of the heavenly powers, the supreme Sovereign of the universe. Hence one of the renderings in the LXX is *κύριος παντοκράτωρ, Lord Almighty*, or rather, *All-sovereign*. See Additional Note on 1 Samuel in this series, p. 235.

PSALM XXV.

An alphabet of prayer and meditation, the utterance of a humble, yet confident faith. It falls into three equal divisions.

i. Prayer for protection, guidance, and pardon (*vv.* 1—7).

ii. Reflections on the character of God (*vv.* 8—10) and on His dealings with those who fear Him (12—14), separated by a prayer for pardon, which springs naturally out of *v.* 10.

iii. Renewed prayer for deliverance in distress (*vv.* 15—21). *v.* 22 is a supernumerary verse, probably a later addition.

Thus the Psalmist begins and ends with prayer, and sustains and kindles faith and devotion by meditating on the truths of revelation.

The speaker is hardly "pious Israel personified." He is an individual, and speaks for and of individuals. Yet it may well be the case that he feels the sins and sufferings of his nation in some measure as though they were his own (e.g. *vv.* 11, 19), and that his prayer for pardon and deliverance reaches beyond his own personal needs.

Thought and language shew the influence of the 'Wisdom,' or religious

philosophy of Israel, embodied in the Book of Proverbs. But the Psalm has no distinct historical background, and might belong to almost any age.

It is one of the nine alphabetic Psalms (see Introd. p. [illegible]). Each verse, usually consisting of two lines, begins with a letter of the alphabet. But as the text stands at present, a word (*O my God*) precedes the *Beth* with which the second line should begin; *Vav* is omitted, or only represented by the second line of *v.* 5, instead of having a separate verse to itself; *Qôph* is wanting, and instead two verses (18, 19) begin with *Resh*; and a supernumerary verse beginning with *P* is added at the end. Some of these irregularities may be due to corruption of the text; but it is a curious fact that two of them, the absence of a separate verse for *Vav*, and the supernumerary *P* verse, are found again in Ps. xxxiv. The two Psalms are clearly related; the one is a prayer, the other a thanksgiving; and they are probably by the same author.

A Psalm of David.

25 (א) Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.
2 O my God, (ב) I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed,
Let not mine enemies triumph over me.
3 (ג) Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed:

1—7. Petition for protection, guidance, and pardon.

1. He who may approach Jehovah's sanctuary must be one 'who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity' (xxiv. 4). Jehovah, and Jehovah alone, is the subject of his desires, his aspirations, his prayers. Cp. lxxxvi. 3; cxliii. 8; Lam. iii. 41.

As the verses are usually distichs it has been conjectured with much probability that the line "on thee do I wait all the day," which overweights *v.* 5, originally belonged to *v.* 1. *v.* 3*a* gains point by this transposition.

2. This verse should begin with the letter *Beth* in the word for *in thee*. It has been suggested that the first word *O my God* was disregarded in the alphabetic arrangement; but it is more probable that it originally belonged to the second line of the preceding verse (so codd. NBA of the LXX), which has now been lost or misplaced. Otherwise it must be omitted. Verse 2 then forms a proper distich:

In thee have I trusted, let me not be ashamed:
Let not mine enemies triumph over me.

Cp. *v.* 20; xxii. 5; xxxi. 1, 17.

3. Render with R.V.

Yea, none that wait on thee shall be ashamed:
They shall be ashamed that deal treacherously without cause.

The words are not a prayer, but the expression of a conviction corresponding to and justifying the prayer of *v.* 2. Cp. Rom. v. 3—5. It certainly gains in point if the last clause of *v.* 5 is joined to *v.* 1, and the

Let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.
(ד) Shew me thy ways, O LORD; 4
Teach me thy paths.
(ה) Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: 5
For thou *art* the God of my salvation;
On thee do I wait all the day.
(ו) Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy loving- 6
kindnesses;
For they *have been* ever of old.
(ז) Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my trans- 7
gressions:
According to thy mercy remember thou me
For thy goodness' sake, O LORD.
(ח) Good and upright *is* the LORD: 8

Psalmist has already spoken of himself as one of "those who wait on Jehovah."

which transgress] Rather as R.V., **that deal treacherously**: a word used of faithless, treacherous conduct towards men (Jud. ix. 23), or God (Jer. iii. 20): here of the faithless desertion of God which is the opposite of patiently waiting upon Him. Cp. cxix. 158.

without cause] Or, *to no purpose*, without result.

4. *Shew me thy ways*] Lit. *make me to know thy ways*: the prayer of Moses in a moment of perplexity (Ex. xxxiii. 13). Cp. Ps. xxvii. 11. God's 'ways' and 'paths' are the purposes and methods of His Providence; or more specifically, the course of life and conduct which He prescribes for men. Cp. xxvii. 11; cxliii. 8.

5. *Lead me* &c.] R.V., **Guide me in thy truth**: not, as at first sight would seem to be the meaning, into a fuller knowledge of revealed truth. Jehovah's truth, so often coupled with His lovingkindness, means His faithfulness; and the sense is either 'guide me in virtue of thy faithfulness'; or 'let me live in the experience of thy faithfulness' (xxvi. 3).

6. An appeal to Jehovah's unchangeableness (Mal. iii. 6). The love of ancient days cannot be exhausted (Jer. ii. 2; xxxi. 3).

For they have been *ever of old*] Lit., *for they* have been *from everlasting*. Cp. ciii. 17; xciii. 2.

7. The word translated *sins* is derived from a root meaning *to miss the mark* or *lose the way*. It denotes primarily the failures, errors, lapses, of frailty; and so is naturally applied to the thoughtless offences of youth. The word for *transgressions* means literally *rebellions*, and denotes the deliberate offences of riper years.

according to thy mercy] **According to thy lovingkindness**, as in *vv.* 6, 10.

for thy goodness' sake] When Moses desired a revelation of God's glory, he was granted a revelation of His goodness (Ex. xxxiii. 19). Cp. xxvii. 13; Rom. ii. 4; xi. 22.

Therefore will he teach sinners in the way.
9 (י) The meek will he guide in judgment:
And the meek will he teach his way.
10 (כ) All the paths of the LORD *are* mercy and truth
Unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.
11 (ל) For thy name's sake, O LORD,
Pardon mine iniquity; for it *is* great.
12 (מ) What man *is* he that feareth the LORD?
Him shall he teach in the way *that* he shall choose.
13 (נ) His soul shall dwell at ease;

8—14. The Psalmist's petitions are grounded upon the revealed character of Jehovah.

8. *Therefore*] He who is at once perfectly loving and perfectly upright must needs guide the erring.

teach] R.V. instruct: the word from which *torah* ('law,' primarily 'instruction') is derived. See on i. 2.

9. *The meek*] The humble-minded. See note on ix. 12. Humility is indispensable for God's scholars. Cp. 1 Pet. v. 5.

in judgment] The practice of right: often coupled with righteousness and equity; e.g. Prov. i. 3.

10. In all His dealings Jehovah proves His loving purpose and His faithfulness to His promises to those who on their part are faithful to Him, keeping the covenant inaugurated by circumcision (Gen. xvii. 2 ff.), and ratified at Sinai (Ex. xix. 5; xxiv. 7, 8); of which the Ark of the Covenant (Num. x. 33) was the outward sign, and the Ten Words written on the Tables of the Covenant were the fundamental charter (Deut. ix. 9). Jehovah's testimonies are His commandments, as witnessing to His will. See note on xix. 7.

mercy and truth] R.V. lovingkindness and truth. So He proclaimed Himself to Moses, as a God 'plenteous in lovingkindness and truth' (Ex. xxxiv. 6).

11. The thought of God's requirements (*v.* 10) makes him feel his own shortcomings, and prompts this prayer for pardon. He appeals to Jehovah's revelation of Himself as the God of mercy. The verse combines *vv.* 5 and 9 of Ex. xxxiv. Cp. xxiii. 3, note; Is. xliii. 25; Jer. xiv. 7.

12. *What man* &c.] A rhetorical question, equivalent to *whosoever*. Cp. xxxiv. 12.

him shall he teach] R.V., him shall he instruct, as in *v.* 8.

in the way that *he shall choose*] In the course of life which His Providence chooses for him: or, *in the way that he should choose;* what course to take in circumstances of doubt or difficulty; or, *in the way that he chooseth:* he chooses 'the fear of the LORD' which is 'the way of truth,' and Jehovah instructs him in it. This is most in accordance with cxix. 30, 173; Prov. i. 29; iii. 31.

13. Temporal blessings are in store for him. He himself *shall con-*

And his seed shall inherit the earth.
(ס) The secret of the LORD *is* with them that fear him; 14
And he will shew them his covenant.
(ע) Mine eyes *are* ever towards the LORD; 15
For he shall pluck my feet out of the net.
(פ) Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; 16
For I *am* desolate and afflicted.
(צ) The troubles of my heart are enlarged: 17
O bring thou me out of my distresses.
(ר) Look upon mine affliction and my pain; 18
And forgive all my sins.

shall continue in prosperity; and his posterity after him shall inherit the land (R.V.), in accordance with the promise to Abraham (Gen. xv. 7, 8), and Israel (Ex. xx. 12; Lev. xxvi. 3 ff.; Deut. iv. 1, 40; &c.). Cp. Ps. xxxvii. 11; Prov. ii. 21, 22; and the N. T. counterpart, Matt. v. 5.

14. Mysterious spiritual blessings await him too. To those who fear Him Jehovah reveals His secret counsel. Cp. Prov. iii. 32; Ps. cxi. 10; Prov. i. 7; Matt. xi. 25. For *secret* R.V. marg. gives alternatives *counsel* or *friendship*. Ideas included in the word, which denotes the confidential intercourse of intimate fellowship. For examples see Gen. xviii. 17; Am. iii. 7.

and he will shew them] Lit. *make them to know* (as in *v.* 4), to experience, in ever fuller and deeper measure, the meaning and blessedness of His covenant. We may also render, *and his covenant is to give them knowledge.*

15—21. Renewed prayer, for deliverance and preservation.

15. *Mine eyes* &c.] The attitude of expectant prayer. Cp. cxli. 8; cxxiii. 1 ff.; 1 Thess. v. 17. Prof. Cheyne compares the proper name Elyōēnai or Elyehōēnai, 'Unto Yahve are mine eyes,' 1 Chr. iii. 23, Ezra viii. 4.

for he shall pluck &c.] Release me from the entanglements and perplexities of life, whether due to my own faults or to the hostility of enemies. Cp. ix. 15; xxxi. 4.

16. *Turn thee*] Or, *look*: the opposite of 'hiding the face' (xxii. 24). Cp. lxxxvi. 16; cxix. 132.

have mercy upon me] Be gracious unto me. See iv. 1, note.

desolate] Solitary; without other friend or helper.

17. The verb rendered *are enlarged* cannot mean 'augmented.' It is all but certain that the consonants should be divided and vocalised differently, giving the appropriate sense, The straitnesses of my heart enlarge thou, and bring me &c.: i.e. relieve my distress. Cp. xviii. 36; cxix. 32.

18. *Look upon* &c.] Behold my affliction and my travail. Cp. ix. 13.

and forgive] Lit. *take away*, sin being regarded as a burden. Cp. xxxii. 1. This verse ought to begin with the letter *Qōph*, and various

19 (ר) Consider mine enemies; for they are many;
And they hate me *with* cruel hatred.
20 (שׁ) O keep my soul, and deliver me:
Let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.
21 (ת) Let integrity and uprightness preserve me;
For I wait on thee.
22 (פ) Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

emendations have been proposed with the object of restoring it. The simplest change is to add *arise* (iii. 7) at the beginning of the verse.

19. *Consider*] **Behold,** the same word as in *v.* 18.

with *cruel hatred*] Lit. *a hatred of violence*, hatred inspired by and leading to cruelty. Cp. xi. 5; xxvii. 12.

20. *O keep* &c.] **Preserve my soul.** Cp. xvi. 1; lxxxvi. 2.

for I put my trust in thee] **For I have taken refuge in thee.** Cp. vii. 1; ii. 12, note.

21. **Let integrity and uprightness guard me.** May single-hearted devotion to God and honourable behaviour to men be as it were guardian angels at my side (lxi. 7). He prays thus, not on the ground of his own merits, but in virtue of his patient dependence on God. Cp. xl. 11. 'Integrity' is the virtue of the 'perfect' man. See xv. 2; xviii. 23; cp. vii. 8. Job was "perfect and upright" (ii. 3). Cp. xxxvii. 37.

22. A concluding prayer for the nation. The alphabet has been completed, and this is a supplementary distich beginning with *Pē*, which has already been represented in *v.* 16. Ps. xxxiv has the same peculiarity. Lagarde has ingeniously conjectured that these verses contain a reference to the names of the authors, Pedael and Pedaiah. But this is very doubtful; and this verse at any rate is probably a liturgical addition to the original Psalm. The absolute use of *God* instead of *Jehovah* is contrary to the usage of the Psalm, and rare in the First Book of Psalms generally. See Introd. p. lv.

PSALM XXVI.

This Psalm is the appeal of conscious integrity for recognition and vindication. The Psalmist calls upon Jehovah to do him justice, pleading the integrity of his life, and offering himself to the searching scrutiny of the All-knowing, upon whose lovingkindness and faithfulness he grounds his confidence (*vv.* 1—3). He has shunned and will shun the society of the godless, and strives to prepare himself duly for the worship of the sanctuary which is his delight (*vv.* 4—7). And therefore he prays that he may not share the premature fate of the wicked, and declaring his purpose to live hereafter as heretofore in his integrity, concludes with a trustful assurance that his prayer is answered, and a resolution of public thanksgiving (*vv.* 8—12).

This Psalm is linked to Ps. xxv, by several resemblances of thought and expression. Compare the professions of integrity in *vv.* 1, 11 with xxv. 21, and of trust in *v.* 1 with xxv. 2; the prayer for deliverance

and grace in *v.* 11 with xxv. 16, 21, 22; the sense of God's loving-kindness and faithfulness in *v.* 3 with xxv. 5, 6, 7, 10. On the other hand, the confessions of sin and prayers for pardon which are a marked feature of Ps. xxv are absent. The Psalmist is contrasting his own sincerity and innocence with the hypocrisy and violence of those whose fate he deprecates, rather than measuring his own defects by the standard of God's holiness.

There are no sufficient grounds for assigning the Psalm to a particular period of David's life, such as Saul's persecution or Absalom's rebellion. More suggestive is Ewald's acute conjecture that it and Ps. xxviii were written in a time of national calamity, probably a pestilence (cp. xxviii. 1), which seemed likely to sweep away righteous and wicked in a common judgment, though his supposition that Josiah was the author is a mere speculation. The Psalmist prays that Jehovah would distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, and save him from sharing the fate of the wicked by a premature death. Yet in the face of the danger his confidence in God is unshaken.

A Psalm of David.

Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: 26
I have trusted also in the LORD; *therefore* I shall not slide.
Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; 2
Try my reins and my heart.
For thy lovingkindness *is* before mine eyes: 3

1—3. The Psalmist's plea for the recognition of his integrity.

1. *Judge me*] Do me justice; shew me to be in the right; vindicate my integrity by discriminating between me and wicked men. Cp. vii. 8; xxxv. 24; xliii. 1.

for I have walked in mine integrity] Sincerity of purpose and single-heartedness of devotion have been the rule of his life. Cp. vii. 8; xv. 2; xviii. 23; and Introd. p. lxxxvii.

therefore *I shall not slide*] A possible rendering: but better, as R.V., without wavering. The context here requires a description of the character of his trust, rather than of its issue.

2. God knows him already (xvii. 3); and fearlessly he offers himself for a fresh scrutiny. This prayer attests at once the clearness of his conscience, and his desire that if aught of evil remains, it may be purged away. Cp. cxxxix. 23, 24. Three words are used to express the thoroughness of the scrutiny. *Examine me*, as the refiner assays his metal to test its fineness; *prove me*, by bringing me into circumstances in which the reality of my faith may be demonstrated; *try me*, as the refiner smelts gold to get rid of any remaining dross. So God 'proved' Abraham (Gen. xxii. 1); and Israel (Deut. viii. 2, 16). The purpose of such heart-searching is 'to give every man according to his ways' (Jer. xvii. 10).

my reins and my heart] The reins are the seat of the affections, the heart of thought and will. Cp. vii. 9; xi. 4.

3. The ground of the prayers in *vv.* 1, 2. He can pray for a

And I have walked in thy truth.
4 I have not sat with vain persons,
Neither will I go in with dissemblers.
5 I have hated the congregation of evildoers;
And will not sit with the wicked.
6 I will wash mine hands in innocency:
So will I compass thine altar, O LORD:
7 That *I* may publish with the voice of thanksgiving,
And tell of all thy wondrous works.
8 LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house,

favourable judgement, and submit himself to this scrutiny, because he knows God's lovingkindness and faithfulness. They are the object of his constant meditation, the daily experience of his life. Cp. xvi. 8; xxv. 10, note.

4—7. The proof of his integrity in his conduct in the past, and his purpose for the future.

4. *I have not sat*] Of deliberate and prolonged intercourse, implying community of tastes and interests. Cp. i. 1; Jer. xv. 17.

vain persons] Lit. *men of vanity*, hollowness, falsehood, unreality: the opposite of truth and righteousness. See xii. 2; xxiv. 4.

neither will I go in] To their houses: or an abbreviation for *go in and out*, associate with.

dissemblers] Lit. *those who hide themselves*; hypocrites who disguise their real thoughts and purposes (xxviii. 3).

5. *I have hated*] R.V., I hate.

the congregation of evil doers] Cp. xxii. 16. Is there not a tacit contrast between the congregation which meets for its own evil purposes, and that which assembles for the worship of Jehovah (*v.* 12)?

6. *I will wash mine hands in innocency*] "As the priests, before they came near to the altar to minister (Ex. xxx. 17—21). What the priest did in symbolical rite, that the priestly people were to do in spiritual reality." *Kay*. Cp. lxxiii. 13: and for the ceremony as symbolising innocence see Deut. xxi. 6; Matt. xxvii. 24.

compass thine altar] Take my place in the ring of worshippers around it. A reference to solemn processions round the altar is questionable.

7. *That* I *may publish with the voice of thanksgiving*] Better, as R.V., that I may make the voice of thanksgiving to be heard.

thy wondrous works] Or, *marvellous works*. See note on ix. 1.

8—12. His love for God's house is a further reason why he should not be involved in the fate of sinners.

8. Taking up the thought of *vv.* 7, 8, he makes it the ground of his plea in *vv.* 9, 10.

I have loved] R.V., I love. It is the correlative of *I hate* in *v.* 5.

And the place where thine honour dwelleth.
Gather not my soul with sinners, 9
Nor my life with bloody men:
In whose hands *is* mischief, 10
And their right hand is full *of* bribes.
But *as for* me, I will walk in mine integrity: 11
Redeem me, and be merciful unto me.
My foot standeth in an even place: 12
In the congregations will I bless the LORD.

the place where thine honour dwelleth] Better, with R.V., **the place where thy glory dwelleth**: lit. *the place of the tabernacle of thy glory*; for the word *mishkan*, rendered *tabernacle*, means properly *dwelling*, the sanctuary where Jehovah *dwelt* among His people (Ex. xxv. 8, 9). Jehovah's glory is His manifested Presence, of which the Ark was the outward symbol. Cp. Ex. xvi. 7; xxxiii. 18, 23; 1 Sam. iv. 21, 22; Ps. lxxviii. 61.

9. *Gather not*] i.e. *take not away*. Let me not share the fate of those whose society and practices I have ever shunned. How natural a prayer if a pestilence was raging which seemed to strike righteous and wicked indiscriminately! The wicked are described as *men of blood* (v. 6), who do not shrink from violence and murder: *in whose hands is mischief* (vii. 3), they deliberately plan and execute crime; *and their right hand is full of bribes*, which they take to pervert justice (xv. 5). Nobles and men in authority are referred to. Comp. Mic. vii. 2, 3.

11. With such evil doers the Psalmist contrasts himself. His purpose if his life is spared, is to shape his conduct as hitherto; and therefore he prays *redeem me* (xxv. 22), deliver me from the fate of the wicked, *and be gracious unto me* (iv. 1, note).

12. Faith realises the answer to its prayer as already granted, and security assured. He has traversed the rough winding path through the gloomy defile, and stands in the open plain, where there is no more fear of stumbling or sudden assault. Life thus prolonged is the reason and the opportunity for public thanksgiving. Cp. xxii. 25.

PSALM XXVII.

Enthusiastic confidence is the keynote of the first six verses of the Psalm. Under Jehovah's guardianship the Psalmist knows no fear in the midst of dangers (*vv.* 1–3). His highest desire is to enjoy Jehovah's fellowship and protection as a guest in His house. He anticipates a speedy triumph over his foes, and promises grateful thanksgiving (*vv.* 4–6). The swing of the rhythm corresponds to the energy of the thought.

Suddenly all is changed: the jubilant rhythm is abandoned; anxious supplication takes the place of joyous faith. Earnestly the Psalmist pleads that Jehovah will not forsake His servant, and appeals to His

promises and His past mercies (*vv.* 7—12). Yet in this crisis Jehovah is his only stay, and he concludes by encouraging himself to faith and patience (*vv.* 13, 14).

Thus the Psalm falls into two equal divisions, with a conclusion. If the two parts are by the same poet, he must clearly have written them at different times, and under the influence of different circumstances. When he added the prayer of *vv.* 7—14 to his former song he reaffirmed the faith of happier days, though it had ceased to give joy and comfort in his present distress. But the marked difference in tone, contents, and rhythm makes it not improbable that two independent Psalms are here combined, or that a later poet appended *vv.* 7—14 to *vv.* 1—6. It is as though he would say: 'I would fain appropriate this bold utterance of faith: but all is dark around me, and I can only pray in faltering tones, and strive to wait in patience.'

The Psalm (or at any rate the first part) has strong claims to be regarded as Davidic, and may best be assigned to the time of Absalom's rebellion, shortly before the final battle. The language of *vv.* 2, 3 is that of a warrior; *v.* 3 breathes the same spirit as in 3, 6; and with *vv.* 4 ff. comp. 2 Sam. xv. 25. Jehovah's abode is still a tent (*v.* 6), though it can be called a temple or palace (*v.* 4) as the abode of a king. Comp. 2 Sam. vi. 17. The later addition to the title, *before he was anointed*, would refer it to Saul's persecution, or to the wars of the first seven years of his reign.

Comp. Pss. iii, xxiii, xci.

A Psalm of David.

27 The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When the wicked, *even* mine enemies and my foes, came
upon me to eat up my flesh,

1—3. With Jehovah on his side, he knows no fear. This faith, the constant theme of prophet and psalmist, finds its N.T. extension in Rom. viii. 31.

1. *my light*] Illuminating the darkness of trouble, anxiety, and danger; giving life and joy. Cp. iv. 6; xviii. 28; xxxvi. 9; xliii. 3; lxxxiv. 11; Is. x. 17; Mic. vii. 8. Again the N.T. interprets the words for us in a larger spiritual sense. John i. 4, 9; viii. 12; 1 John i. 5.

my salvation] Cp. *v.* 9; Ex. xv. 2.

strength] Or, *stronghold*, a defence against all assaults. Cp. xviii. 2; xxxi. 2, 3.

2. When evil-doers came near against me to eat my flesh,
Even mine adversaries and my foes, they stumbled and fell.

This may refer to past experience, or it may be a confident anticipation of the discomfiture of his foes. According to a common Hebrew idiom the perfect tense may realise their defeat as an accom-

They stumbled and fell.
Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall 3
not fear:
Though war should rise against me, in this *will* I *be* confident.
One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; 4
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.
For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: 5
In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
He shall set me up upon a rock.

plished fact. See Appendix, Note IV. He compares his assailants to wild beasts, eager to devour him. Cp. iii. 7.

stumbled and fell] Cp. Is. viii. 15; Jer. xlvi. 6.

3. The language may be figurative, but is more natural, if the writer was, like David, actually exposed to war's alarms. Cp. iii. 6.

in this] In the truth of *v.* 1. But it is better to render with R.V., even then, in spite of opposing armies.

4—6. To be Jehovah's guest and live secure under His protection is the Psalmist's chief desire; and even now he confidently anticipates deliverance from his foes. *v.* 4 can hardly be understood literally of a lifelong residence in the Temple. Rather, as in xxiii. 4, 5; xv. 1, Jehovah is thought of as the royal host, whose guests are secure under His protection, and enjoy familiar intercourse with Him. But the language is suggested by the possibility of approach to God in His earthly house, and perhaps by the suppliant's right of asylum there.

4. *One thing have I desired*] R.V., One thing have I asked; above all others as the climax of my petitions.

to behold] The word implies a wondering and delighted *gazing*.

the beauty] Or, *pleasantness*; not merely the outward beauty of the sanctuary and its worship, but the gracious kindliness of Jehovah to His guests. Cp. xvi. 11; xc. 17; Prov. iii. 17.

to inquire in his temple] Investigating His character and dealings with men. For knowledge gained and doubts solved by meditation in the Temple see lxxiii. 17. We may also render, *to consider his temple* (R.V. marg.): to contemplate it, for the sanctuary and its ordinances were to the devout worshipper symbols of heavenly realities. Cp. Is. vi.

5. **For he shall conceal me in his pavilion in the day of trouble,**
He shall hide me in the hiding-place of his tent;
Upon a rock shall he lift me up.

He will be secured from danger as one who is sheltered from heat and storm, or safe from assault in some inaccessible rock fortress.

6 And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies
round about me:
Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy;
I will sing, yea, I will sing *praises* unto the LORD.

7 Hear, O LORD, *when* I cry *with* my voice:
Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.
8 *When thou saidst*, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee,
Thy face, LORD, will I seek.
9 Hide not thy face *far* from me;
Put not thy servant away in anger:

Cp. xxxi. 20; Is. iv. 6; and the expression *his hidden or secret ones* in Ps. lxxxiii. 3.

6. *And now* &c.] In the immediate future he anticipates not protection only but triumphant victory. Cp. iii. 3; cx. 7.

in his tabernacle] Lit. in his tent, as in the preceding verse. There it may simply mean *dwelling*, in a general figurative sense; but here in connexion with the offering of sacrifice, it would seem that the tent which David pitched for the Ark on Mount Zion (2 Sam. vi. 17) must be meant.

sacrifices of joy] A bold expression for *sacrifices of thanksgiving*. *Joy* may mean the jubilant *shouting* with which religious festivities were celebrated (2 Sam. vi. 15; Ps. xxxiii. 3; xlvii. 5); or *trumpet-sound*, such as accompanied certain sacrifices (Num. x. 10); here probably the former.

7—14. The tone of the Psalm changes abruptly to plaintive and anxious supplication. God seems to be on the point of hiding His face.

7. *Have mercy*] Be gracious.

8. The A.V. gives the general sense fairly. But the text as it stands must be rendered:

Unto thee my heart hath said:
'Seek ye my face'; 'Thy face, Jehovah, will I seek.'

In prayer from his innermost heart the Psalmist pleads the invitation which Jehovah addresses to His people, *Seek ye my face;* and responds to it on his own behalf, *Thy face, Jehovah, will I seek.* The construction is bold, but finds a parallel in Job xlii. 3—5, where in *vv.* 3 *a*, 4 Job quotes the Lord's words, and in *vv.* 3 *b*, 5 answers them. We need not assume a reference to any particular passage (e.g. Deut. iv. 29). The invitation is the sum of all revelation. Cp. Matt. vii. 7 ff.

9. Hide not thy face from me (R.V.). A prayer grounded on the divine promise which he has obeyed. Cp. xxii. 24.

put not &c.] Or, *turn not*, like the unjust judge who turns the needy from his right (Job xxiv. 4; Is. x. 2; Luke xviii. 1 ff.).

Thou hast been my help; leave me not,
Neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.
When my father and my mother forsake me, 10
Then the LORD will take me up.
Teach me thy way, O LORD, 11
And lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.
Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: 12
For false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.
I had fainted, unless I had believed 13
To see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

in anger] See note on vi. 1.

thou hast been my help] An appeal to past experience. Surely God cannot have changed.

leave me not] R.V., cast me not off (xciv. 14; 1 Kings viii. 57).

10. *When my father* &c.] Or, as R.V.,

For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but &c.

A proverbial expression. (Comp. '*bereavement* to my soul,' xxxv. 12). Though he is friendless and forsaken as a deserted child, Jehovah will adopt him and care for him. His love is stronger than that of the closest human relations. Cp. Is. xlix. 15; Ps. ciii. 13.

11. Cp. v. 8; xxv. 12. In the course of life designed for him by God he will be safe. He prays that it may be like a path along a level open plain, free from pitfalls and places where enemies may lurk in ambush. *Plain* is the same word as *even* in xxvi. 12; and *mine enemies* means literally, *those that lie in wait for me*, as in v. 8. Cp. Mk. xii. 13 for illustration.

12. *enemies*] R.V., adversaries, as in *v.* 2.

false witnesses] Slanderous calumniators are meant, rather than actual witnesses in court. Cp. xxxv. 11; Prov. vi. 19.

such as breathe out cruelty] Bent on injuring him by their talk. For the phrase cp. Acts ix. 1.

13. The word for *unless* is marked with dots in the Massoretic text as probably spurious. Omitting it, we may render;

I believe that I shall see &c.

If it is retained, the construction is an aposiopesis:

O! had I not believed &c.;

or an apodosis may be supplied, as in A.V.

to see] The construction of the Heb. verb implies the sense, *to see and enjoy*.

in the land of the living] Here, as in lii. 5; cxvi. 9; cxlii. 5; Is. xxxviii. 11; liii. 8; &c., this life on earth in contrast to Sheol, the land of death: not, as in the natural Christian application of the words and as the Targum already paraphrases, 'the land of everlasting life'.

14 Wait on the LORD:
Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart:
Wait, I say, on the LORD.

14. The Psalmist addresses himself, and encourages himself to patience. His faith rebukes his faintness.

Be of good courage] R.V., Be strong, and let thine heart take courage. Cp. xxxi. 24; Deut. xxxi. 7; Josh. i. 6, 7, 9, 18.

Wait, I say] R.V., Yea, wait thou. Cp. xxv. 3; xxxvii. 9, 34; Prov. xx. 22.

PSALM XXVIII.

An urgent cry for audience (*vv.* 1, 2) is followed by a prayer that the Psalmist may be delivered from sharing the fate of evil doers and hypocrites, and that they may receive the retribution which is the fitting punishment of their blind disbelief (*vv.* 3–5). Suddenly the Psalmist breaks into joyous thanksgiving. His prayer is answered, or faith guarantees that it will be answered (*vv.* 6, 7); and the Psalm concludes with an intercession for the people (*vv.* 8, 9).

The Psalm is a companion to Ps. xxvi. The circumstances are similar, but here the danger is yet more pressing. Cp. *v.* 3 with xxvi. 9, 10. The Psalmist is in imminent peril of death. He fears that he may share the fate of the godless. Was there a pestilence raging, which threatened to sweep away righteous and wicked without distinction? There he pleads his own integrity, here the iniquity and the godlessness of the wicked, as the reason for discriminating. Jehovah will manifest His justice alike in sparing the righteous and punishing the wicked.

The Psalm is however commonly thought to have been written by David during his flight from Absalom. *v.* 3 then alludes to the character of the treacherous conspirators, and *v.* 5 refers to their obstinate refusal to recognise the hand of Jehovah in David's choice and elevation to the throne; while the concluding prayer is such as the king might well offer for a people torn by intestine quarrels.

A Psalm of David.

28 Unto thee will I cry, O LORD, my rock; be not silent to me:

1, 2. Introductory appeal for a hearing, emphasising the urgency of the need.

1. Render with R.V.,

Unto thee, O LORD, will I call;
My rock, be not thou deaf unto me.

He appeals to Jehovah as his *rock*, the ground of his confidence. See xviii. 2 (note), 31.

be not silent unto me] Lit. *from me;* and similarly in the next line. The rendering *be not silent* may stand, as in xxxv. 22; xxxix. 12; or we may render with R.V., **be not thou deaf.** The sense is, 'Turn not

Lest, *if* thou be silent to me, I become like them that go
down into the pit.
Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, 2
When I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.
Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers 3
of iniquity,
Which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief *is* in
their hearts.
Give them according to their deeds, 4
And according to the wickedness of their endeavours:

away from me as though thou didst not hear, lest if thou turn away in unregarding silence, I become' &c.

like them that go down to the pit] i.e. the dying or the dead. *The pit* is the grave or Sheol. Cp. xxii. 29; lxxviii. 4; Prov. i. 12. How natural a prayer if people were dying of pestilence all round him! The last line recurs in cxliii. 7.

2. The first line recurs in xxxi. 22.

when I cry] A stronger word than that in v. 1, meaning to *cry for help*.

when I lift up my hands] The attitude of prayer (lxiii. 4; 1 Tim. ii. 8), the outward symbol of an uplifted heart (xxv. 1).

toward thy holy oracle] Lit., as R.V. marg., *toward the innermost place of thy sanctuary*, i.e. the most holy place, where the Ark, the symbol of God's Presence among His people, was. See 1 Kings vi. 16 ff.; viii. 6. The rendering *oracle*, following Jerome's *oraculum*, rests upon a wrong derivation. The word does not in itself denote the place where God answers. It is used elsewhere only in the accounts of the building of the Temple (1 Kings vi—viii; 2 Chr. iii—v). The worshipper naturally turns as he prays towards Jehovah's dwelling-place in heaven (1 Kings viii. 22), or its earthly counterpart (1 Kings viii. 30 ff.). Cp. Ps. v. 7.

3—5. The Psalmist's prayer that he may be distinguished from the wicked, and that they may be judged as they deserve.

3. *Draw me not away*] Cp. xxvi. 9. But the word here is stronger, suggesting the idea of criminals being dragged off to execution. He prays that he may not share the fate of the wicked in the judgment now being executed.

which speak peace to &c.] Rather, as R.V., with. Double-hearted hypocrites; cp. xii. 2; Jer. ix. 8; and contrast xv. 2.

4. Give them according to their work,
And according to the evil of their doings:
Give them according to the operation of their hands.

This is not a vindictive craving for personal revenge, but a solemn prayer that Jehovah will openly convict false and wicked men by manifesting His righteous judgements upon them, and punishing them as they deserve. See Introd. p. xc.

Give them after the work of their hands;
Render to them their desert.
5 Because they regard not the works of the LORD,
Nor the operation of his hands,
He shall destroy them, and not build them up.

6 Blessed *be* the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.
7 The LORD *is* my strength and my shield;
My heart trusted in him, and I am helped:
Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth;
And with my song will I praise him.
8 The LORD *is* their strength,
And he *is* the saving strength of his anointed.
9 Save thy people,

Give] Of a judicial sentence. Cp. Hos. ix. 14; Jer. xxxii. 19.

their desert] The word denotes an *action* either good or bad, and its fitting reward.

5. Atheists in practice if not in profession, they deny that Jehovah governs the world, and refuse to discern His working in creation, in providence, and in judgement. Unbelief lies at the root of all their sin. *The works of the Lord* and *the operation of his hands* stand in strong contrast to *their work* and *the operation of their hands* in v. 4. Compare the parallels to this and v. 4 in Is. i. 16; iii. 8—11; v. 12, 19; xxii. 11.

he shall destroy them] Better with P.B.V. and R.V., he shall break them down. Cp. Jer. xxiv. 6.

6, 7. Thanksgiving succeeds to prayer. Are we to suppose that faith realises the answer to its prayer as already granted, and can give thanks accordingly? or that this conclusion was added by the Psalmist subsequently as a grateful memorial of his deliverance? Either alternative is possible; but here and in xxxi. 21—24 we seem to have a record of actual deliverance. vi. 8 ff. is somewhat different.

7. *my strength*] Cp. Ex. xv. 2. *my shield*] See note on iii. 3.

trusted] Better as R.V., hath trusted.

greatly rejoiceth] Exulteth. Cp. v. 11; 1 Sam. ii. 1.

8, 9. Concluding intercession for the people. Cf. iii. 8.

8. *their strength*] *Their* must refer to the people. But there is no antecedent for the pronoun, and it is best to follow a few Heb. MSS., the LXX, Vulg., and Syr., in reading, a strength unto his people. Cp. xxix. 11.

and he is &c.] R.V., and he is a strong hold of salvation to his anointed. Cp. xxvii. 1. *Salvation* is lit. *salvations*, great and manifold deliverance. Cp. xviii. 50; xx. 6.

And bless thine inheritance:
Feed them also, and lift them up for ever.

9. *thine inheritance*] Israel. Cp. Deut. iv. 20.

feed them] Lit. *shepherd them.* Cp. xxiii. 1; 2 Sam. vii. 7. *Govern them* in the adaptation of this verse in the Te Deum is from the Vulg. *rege.*

lift them up] Exalt them; as the word is used in 2 Sam. v. 12. But we should probably render as in R.V., *bear them up*; either as a shepherd carries his sheep (Is. xl. 11), continuing the idea of the preceding word; or as a father carries his child, a figure often applied to Jehovah's care for Israel. See Deut. i. 31; Is. xlvi. 3, 4; lxiii. 9. Cp. too Ex. xix. 4; Deut. xxxii. 11.

PSALM XXIX.

The devout Israelite's view of Nature was profoundly religious. He did not contemplate its wonder and beauty and variety simply for their own sake. All spoke to him of God's power and glory and beneficence, or supplied him with emblems and figures for the delineation of God's attributes and working. Thus the thunder was to him the Voice of God, and all the terrible phenomena of the storm were an expression of the majesty of the Eternal Sovereign of the Universe. See Ex. xix. 16; xx. 18; Ps. xviii. 7 ff. (and notes there); Is. xxx. 27 ff.; Hab. iii; &c.: and for Nature as the revelation of God see especially Pss. viii, xix, civ.

It must be remembered that storms in Palestine are often far more violent and impressive than storms in this country. See the description of a storm at Sinai quoted in Stanley's *Jewish Church*, Lect. VII. Vol. I. p. 128.

The Psalm falls into three divisions: *vv.* 3–9 form the main part, with a prelude, *vv.* 1, 2, and conclusion, *vv.* 10, 11.

i. The angels are summoned to render their tribute of praise to Jehovah (*vv.* 1, 2).

ii. The special occasion of this summons is the revelation of His majesty on earth, where the thunder of His Voice convulsing all nature proclaims His power and glory (*vv.* 3—9).

iii. But terrible as is this manifestation, His people need not fear. Towards them the might of the Eternal King displays itself in blessing (*vv.* 10, 11).

From the title in the LXX (ᾠδὴ τοῦ σκηνῆς, Vulg. *in consummatione tabernaculi*) it appears that in the time of the Second Temple this Psalm was sung on the 8th or concluding day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. xxiii. 36; where for 'solemn assembly' the LXX has ἐξόδιον = 'closing festival,' as R.V. marg.). According to the Talmudic treatise *Sopherim* it is the Psalm for Pentecost, and it is now used in the Synagogue on the first day of that festival.

A Psalm of David.

29 Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty,
Give unto the LORD glory and strength.
2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name;
Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

1, 2. Prelude, calling upon the angels to celebrate Jehovah's glory. Cp. xcvi. 7—9, where however the words are differently applied.

1. *O ye mighty*] The phrase *bne elim* admits of three renderings. (1) *O ye sons of the mighty* (R.V.), which may mean either powerful nobles, or mighty celestial beings. (2) *O ye sons of the gods* (R.V. marg.), meaning either beings "belonging to the class of superhuman, heavenly powers" (Cheyne); or the nations who "had forgotten their true parentage, and ranged themselves under the protection of deified heroes or invented gods, and are now invited to remember themselves and return to the Lord." (Kay). Cp. xcvi. 7; Jer. ii. 27. (3) *O ye sons of God* (R.V. marg., taking *bne elim* as a doubly formed plural of *ben el*); i.e. angels, who are called *bne elohim*, 'sons of God,' in Job i. 6; ii. 1; xxxviii. 7. The last rendering is the best; but whichever rendering is adopted, the use of the phrase in Ps. lxxxix. 6 (comp. *vv.* 5 and 7) is decisive for the meaning angels. The spiritual beings which surround God's throne in heaven are called upon to render Him their tribute of adoration. Cp. ciii. 20 f.; cxlviii. 1 f.; Job xxxviii. 7. The special occasion of the summons is the manifestation of His glory upon earth which the Psalmist describes in *vv.* 3—9. So the Seraphic chorus in Is. vi. 3 recognise the earth as "full of Jehovah's glory."

Give] i.e. ascribe, attribute. Recognise by your confession and proclamation those attributes of glory and strength which are supremely His. Cp. Deut. xxxii. 3; Ps. lxviii. 34; Lk. xvii. 18; Rom. iv. 20; Apoc. xiv. 7.

The P.B.V., *Bring unto the Lord, O ye mighty, bring young rams unto the Lord*, comes from the LXX through the Vulg. In the present text of the LXX, the first line of the verse is doubly represented. *Elim* may mean *rams*, and an alternative rendering of *bne elim* as *young rams*, originally placed in the margin, has found its way into the text.

2. *the glory due unto his name*] Lit *the glory of his name*, particularising the general idea of glory in *v.* 1. *The glory of his name* is His glory as He reveals Himself in the world (v. 11 note); here, as the context shews, especially in Nature.

in the beauty of holiness] Suggestive as this rendering is, it can hardly be right; and the true sense is that given in R.V. marg., in holy array. Cp. Ps. xcvi. 9 (= 1 Chr. xvi. 29); 2 Chr. xx. 21 (R.V. marg.); Ps. cx. 3. The ideas of earth are transferred to heaven. As the priests in the earthly temple were clothed in "holy garments for glory and for beauty" (Ex. xxviii. 2), so even the ministrants in the heavenly temple must be arrayed befittingly.

The voice of the LORD *is* upon the waters: 3
The God of glory thundereth:
The LORD *is* upon many waters.
The voice of the LORD *is* powerful; 4
The voice of the LORD *is* full of majesty.
The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; 5
Yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.
He maketh them also to skip like a calf; 6
Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.
The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire. 7

3—9. The exhibition of Jehovah's power which is the ground of the opening call to praise. His voice is heard in the pealing of the thunder above the storm-clouds (*vv.* 3, 4); the storm bursts, it shatters the cedars and shakes the mountains in the far north (*vv.* 5, 6); the lightnings flash (*v.* 7); the deserts to the far south with their affrighted denizens tremble (*vv.* 8, 9); and over all resounds the chorus, Glory (*v.* 9 *b*). The seven times repeated *voice of the* LORD is like successive peals of thunder.

3. *The voice of the* LORD] So thunder is called in Ex. ix. 23 ff.; Ps. xviii. 13; &c. Cp. Rev. x. 3 f.

upon the waters] Hardly the sea, as though the storm were represented as coming in from the Mediterranean; but rather the waters collected in the dense masses of storm-cloud upon which Jehovah rides (xviii. 9 ff.; civ. 3; Jer. x. 13).

the God of glory] Cp. "the King of glory" (xxiv. 7 ff.).

the LORD *is upon many waters*] The idea of the first line is repeated and emphasised. Not Jehovah's voice alone, but Jehovah Himself is there, and the waters are many (or, *great*). The R.V. *Even the* LORD *upon many waters* is hardly an improvement. The P.B.V. of *vv.* 3, 4 is a free paraphrase of the supposed sense.

4. is *powerful ... is full of majesty*] Lit. *is with power ... is with majesty.*

5. *cedars*] The noblest and strongest of the trees of the forest; emblematical of worldly magnificence (Is. ii. 13).

yea, the LORD *breaketh*] R.V. yea, the LORD breaketh in pieces. The idea of the first line is emphasised and particularised in the second. Cp. *v.* 8.

6. *them*] Not the cedars, but the mountains generally, to be understood from *Lebanon* and *Sirion* in the next line. Cp. cxiv. 4, 6; xviii. 7 ff.

Sirion] The old Sidonian name for Hermon (Deut. iii. 9), derived probably from the glistening of the snow on its summit. Lebanon and Sirion are specified as the noblest mountains of Palestine, and also as forming the northern boundary of the land.

unicorn] R.V. wild ox. See note on xxii. 21.

7. *divideth the flames of fire*] Better, as in R.V. cleaveth the flames

8 The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness;
The Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.
9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve,
And discovereth the forests:
And in his temple doth every one speak of *his* glory.
10 The LORD sitteth upon the flood;
Yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever.
11 The LORD will give strength unto his people;
The LORD will bless his people with peace.

of fire; or, as in R.V. marg., *heweth out flames of fire*; a poetical description of the forked lightnings darting from the cloud.

8. *shaketh the wilderness*] Or, maketh the wilderness tremble. Cp. xcvi. 9; xcvii. 4; cxiv. 7.

the LORD...the wilderness of Kadesh] Again with poetical effect emphasising and specialising the idea of the previous line. The storm sweeps down to the desert in the far south. Kadesh, famous in the history of Israel's wanderings, was the eastern part of the desert toward the border of Edom (Num. xx. 16), though its exact position is disputed.

9. *maketh the hinds to calve*] Prematurely, in fear; an observed fact. There is no need to emend (though the change required would be very slight), *shaketh* (or, *pierceth*) *the oaks*.

discovereth] i.e. as R.V., strippeth the forests bare, of branches, leaves, bark. *Discover* is an archaism for *uncover* (xviii. 15, note).

and in his temple &c.] R.V., And in his temple everything saith, Glory. It is tempting to understand *his temple* of heaven and earth, and to regard the line as a summary of the message of the storm; but *temple* (or, *palace*) must mean heaven; and the meaning is better given by rendering

While in his temple all are saying, Glory.

This is the chant of the angelic worshippers (xcvi. 1, 2) as they watch the manifestation of Jehovah's majesty.

10, 11. Conclusion. The storm passes, but HE whose glory it declares is the Eternal King, the Judge of the world, the Guardian of His people. Awful as is His power, they need not fear. To them it speaks of peace.

10. **The LORD sat** *as king* **at the Flood;**
Yea, the LORD sitteth as king for ever (R.V.).

According to the A.V. *the flood* appears to mean the deluge of rain which falls in the storm. But the word *mabûl* is found nowhere else but in Gen. vi—xi, and is best explained by its use there. The storm reminds the poet of the great typical example of judgement and mercy, in which Jehovah's judicial sovereignty was exhibited.

Literally we may render, *sat for the Flood*; took His seat on His throne in order to execute that memorable judgement (Ps. ix. 7).

11. Comp. xxviii. 8, 9; xlvi. 1—3; and the blessing in Num. vi.

24—26. For His own people He is not the God of terror; for them all ends in peace. "This closing word *with song* is like a rainbow arch over the Psalm. The beginning of the Psalm shews us heaven open, and the throne of God in the midst of the angelic songs of praise; while its close shews us His victorious people upon earth, blessed with peace in the midst of the terrible utterance of His wrath. *Gloria in excelsis* is the beginning, and *pax in terris* the end." *Delitzsch.*

PSALM XXX.

A thanksgiving for recovery from an almost fatal sickness, and a reflection on the lessons which it was sent to teach. Cp. cxix. 67. The Psalmist praises Jehovah for preserving his life in answer to his prayer (1—3), and calls upon the godly to join him in thanksgiving (4, 5). He goes on to relate his own experience of God's mercy. In prosperity he had grown presumptuous, till God withdrew His favour, and trouble came (6, 7). Then he pleaded that his life might be spared (8—10): his prayer was answered; his life was prolonged that he might praise Jehovah, and in thanksgiving will he employ the remainder of his days (11, 12).

The Psalm is entitled, A Psalm: a Song at the Dedication of the House; *a Psalm* of David (R.V.): and this title has generally been supposed to refer to the occasion for which the Psalm was written. But commentators are not agreed whether *the House* means the Temple or David's Palace. The term *dedication* is used of a house (Deut. xx. 5), or city walls (Neh. xii. 27), as well as of sacred things and places (Num. vii. 10 ff.; 1 Kings viii. 63; Ezra vi. 16, 17). Some refer it to David's palace in Zion (2 Sam. v. 11), and suppose that he had recently recovered from a severe illness: others to the dedication of the site of the Temple (1 Chr. xxi. 26; xxii. 1) after the great Plague, regarding the allusions to sickness in the Psalm as not literal but figurative of the anguish which the king felt for the sufferings of his people.

But it is most probable that the title does not refer to the occasion of the Psalm at all, but to its liturgical use at the Dedication of the Second Temple (Ezra vi. 16), or in later times at the Feast of the Dedication, to which it is assigned in the Talmudic treatise *Sopherim*. Comp. the title of Ps. xcii, and of xxix in the LXX. The title appears to be a composite one. The words *A Song at the Dedication of the House* are inserted awkwardly between *A Psalm* and *of David*. The Feast of the Dedication (John x. 22) was instituted by Judas Maccabaeus in B.C. 165, to commemorate the purification of the Temple after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes, and the erection of the new altar of burnt-offering (1 Macc. iv. 52 ff.; 2 Macc. x. 1 ff.).

But it does not follow that the Psalm was written for either of these occasions. More probably it was already familiar, and was selected as appropriate to the circumstances. The very existence of the nation had been at stake; it had been suddenly and unexpectedly freed from a crushing tyranny and as it were restored to life; and this Psalm supplied it with fitting language in which to give thanks for its

deliverance. The experience of the individual had been repeated in that of the nation.

This thanksgiving corresponds to the prayer of Ps. vi. Comp. *v.* 2 *b* with vi. 2 *b*; *v.* 5 *a* with vi. 1 *a*; *v.* 7 *b* with vi. 2, 3, 10; *v.* 9 with vi. 5. Hezekiah's prayer (Is. xxxviii. 10—20) seems to contain reminiscences of it; comp. especially *vv.* 18—20 with *vv.* 9 ff.

A Psalm *and* Song *at* the dedication of the house of David.

30 I will extol thee, O LORD, for thou hast lifted me up,
And hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.
2 O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.
3 O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave:
Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down *to* the pit.
4 Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his,

1—3. Thanksgiving for deliverance from death in answer to prayer.

1. *I will extol thee*] Or, *exalt*, as the word is rendered in Ex. xv. 2; Ps. xxxiv. 3; Is. xxv. 1; &c. The same word is used of God's exalting men to high estate (1 Sam. ii. 7), or lifting them up out of danger into safety (ix. 13; xxvii. 5); and man's return is to exalt God by proclaiming His supreme exaltedness.

thou hast lifted me up] R.V., thou hast raised me up, a peculiar word, meaning literally, *thou hast drawn me up*, from the depths of trouble, or the pit of Sheol.

and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me] His death would have been the occasion for the triumph of his enemies. For the malignant delight of enemies enhancing the bitterness of misfortune see xxxv. 19, 24 ff.; xxxviii. 16; Lam. ii. 17.

2. *healed me*] Best taken literally of restoration from sickness.

3. So desperate was his sickness that his recovery was as life from the dead, a veritable resurrection from the grave.

from the grave] R.V. from Sheol. See note on vi. 5. Cp. 1 Sam. ii. 6.

thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to *the pit*] Better, thou hast restored me to life from among them that go down to the pit. He was already as good as dead, when Jehovah raised him up again. Cp. ix. 13; lxxxvii. 4 ff. This is the reading of the *Kthībh*, which is supported by the LXX and Syr., and by xxviii. 1. The A.V. *that I should not go down* follows the *Qrē*, which is supported by the Targ. and Jer., but involves an anomalous grammatical form, and gives a less vigorous sense.

4, 5. An invitation to the godly to join in thanksgiving, in view of those attributes of Jehovah of which the Psalmist has just had experience. Cp. ix. 11; xxii. 23.

4. *Sing*] Sing praise (R. V.); or, *sing psalms*.

saints] See note on iv. 3.

And give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.
For his anger *endureth but* a moment; in his favour *is* life: 5
Weeping may endure for a night, but joy *cometh* in the morning.
And in my prosperity I said, 6

at the remembrance of his holiness] Lit. *to the memorial of his holiness*, and so virtually, as R.V., to his holy name. For His name is that which brings to remembrance all that He is and does. See Ex. iii. 15; and cp. Ps. xcvii. 12; cxxii. 4. It is here called the memorial of his *holiness*, because the mercy and faithfulness which the Psalmist is celebrating are rays out of the light of holiness. Cp. xxxiii. 21.

5. Literally,

For a moment in his anger;
life in his favour:

which is generally explained to mean, as in R.V. marg.,

For his anger is but for a moment;
His favour is for a life-time:

on the ground that the parallelism requires the contrast between *a life-time* and *a moment*. But this is a maimed and inadequate explanation. The parallelism is (as is often the case) incomplete; *life* is not the antithesis to *a moment* but to the adversity which comes in Jehovah's anger. If the thought of the lines were expanded it would be:

For in his anger is adversity for a moment;
In his favour is life for length of days.

The A.V. may therefore be retained as a tolerable paraphrase. *Life* carries with it the ideas of light and joy and prosperity. Cp. xvi. 11; xxi. 4; xxxvi. 9.

weeping &c.] Literally;

Weeping may come in to lodge at even,
But in the morning there is singing.

Sorrow is but the passing wayfarer, who only tarries for the night; with dawn it is transfigured into joy, or joy comes to takes its place. Note the natural and suggestive contrast between the dark night of trouble and the bright morn of rejoicing. Cp. xlix. 14; xc. 14; cxliii. 8; and for the truth expressed by the whole verse, which is a commentary on Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7, see ciii. 8 ff.; Is. liv. 7, 8; Mic. vii. 18; John xvi. 20; and indeed the whole of the O. T. and N. T.

6, 7. The Psalmist relates his own experience of the truth stated in the preceding verse. His presumption had required the correction of chastisement.

6. Render with R.V.

As for me, I said in my prosperity.

The word translated *prosperity* includes the idea of careless security, resulting from uninterrupted good fortune. Comp. Prov. i. 32; and for the carnal pride that is apt to spring from prosperity, see Deut. viii. 10 ff.; xxxii. 15; Dan. iv. 27 ff.

I shall never be moved.

7 LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand
strong:
Thou didst hide thy face, *and* I was troubled.

8 I cried to thee, O LORD;
And unto the LORD I made supplication.

9 What profit *is there* in my blood, when I go down to the pit?
Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?

10 Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me:
LORD, be thou my helper.

I shall never be moved] Forgetting his dependence upon God, and approaching perilously near the godless man's self-confident boast (x. 6).

7. R.V., **Thou, LORD, of thy favour hadst made my mountain to stand strong**; lit. *hadst established strength for my mountain*. Zion, strong by position and art, may be thought of, partly in itself, partly as an emblem of the Davidic kingdom. Fortress and kingdom alike derived their real strength from Jehovah. Cp. 1 K. xv. 4; 2 Chron. ix. 8. But the reading is doubtful. The LXX, Vulg., and Syr. represent, *hadst established strength for my mercy*. The Targum, which rarely departs from the Massoretic Text, gives *hadst made me stand upon strong mountains*; a figure for security. Cp. xviii. 33; xxvii. 5.

thou didst hide thy face] Withdrawing the light of thy favour. Then *I was troubled* (omit *and* which A.V. inserts: a strong word, expressing the confusion and helplessness of terror, as in vi. 2, 3, 10 (A.V. *vexed*); civ. 29.

8—10. By trouble he learnt whence his strength came, and betook himself to prayer. *vv.* 9, 10 are the words of his prayer.

8. The tense in the original is inadequately represented by a simple perfect, though its precise force is not easy to define. It may express the frequent repetition of the prayer, or, like a historic present, it may set the action vividly before us as in actual progress (App., Note IV); or possibly throwing himself back into the past, the Psalmist gives the words of his resolution: [I said,] *Unto thee, O Jehovah, will I call* (=xxviii. 1); *yea, unto the Lord* (the best attested reading is *Adonai*) *will I make supplication* (cxlii. 1).

9. What advantage would it be to Thee to slay me? Nay, Thou wouldest lose Thy servant's praises. For the form of the question cp. Job xxii. 3. The same motive is appealed to in Hezekiah's prayer, Is. xxxviii. 18, 19. Cp. Ps. vi. 5; lxxxviii. 10 ff.; cxv. 17. On this gloomy view of death as the interruption of communion with God, see Introd. p. xciii ff.

the dust] Not the dust into which the body is dissolved, but the grave, as in xxii. 15, 29.

thy truth] God's faithfulness (xxv. 5), which is the object of the praises of the faithful.

Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: 11
Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me *with* gladness:
To the end that *my* glory may sing *praise* to thee, and not 12
be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

11, 12. Prayer answered: life prolonged, and its purpose.

11. Better, Thou didst turn ..didst loose ..and gird. He looks back to the moment when his prayer was answered.

mourning...dancing] The gestures of sorrow and joy are contrasted, for mourning means literally the beating of the breast (*planctus*). Cp. Lam. v. 15. In place of the sackcloth which was the mourner's garb, gladness clothes him like a festal garment. Cp. Is. lxi. 3.

12. my *glory*] My soul, as in vii. 5 (note); lvii. 8.

for ever] All the days of my life. See 1 Sam. i. 22 compared with v. 28. But the Psalmist's words had a larger meaning than he could as yet know (Rev. xxii. 3 ff.).

PSALM XXXI.

Worn out in mind and body, despised, defamed, and persecuted, the Psalmist casts himself upon God. Faith upholds him as he recalls past mercies; despondency overwhelms him as he thinks of his present distress; till the clouds clear, and the sunlight of God's goodness floods his soul.

The Psalm falls into three divisions.

i. Professions of trust and prayers for deliverance grounded upon the experience of past mercies (1—8).

ii. Urgent pleading, with a pathetic description of the extremity of his need (9—18).

iii. Grateful celebration of God's goodness, once more demonstrated in the deliverance of the Psalmist, who looks back in surprise upon his own faint-heartedness, and concludes by exhorting all the godly to take courage (19—24).

Most of the earlier commentators suppose that the Psalm was written by David in the wilderness of Maon, and point to the coincidence between *in my haste* (*v.* 22), and "David *made haste* to flee" (1 Sam. xxiii. 26). The Sept. translators appear to have seen in that verse a reference to the occasion of the Psalm, for they add ἐκστάσιος (*for desperation*) to the title, and ἐν τῇ ἐκστάσει μου (*in my desperation*) is their rendering in *v.* 22.

But the situation of the Psalmist and the tone of the Psalm would rather suggest that Jeremiah, or some prophet in similar circumstances of persecution, was its author. Comp. *v.* 10 with Jer. xx. 18; 'the broken vessel' (*v.* 12) with Jer. xxii. 28; xlviii. 38; *v.* 13 with Jer. xx. 10; *v.* 17 with Jer. xvii. 18; *v.* 22 with Lam. iii. 54. Still it is quite possible that Jeremiah may be using the words of the Psalm which was familiar to him.

The striking difference in the tone of *vv.* 9–18 from that of 1–8 and 19–24 suggests the possibility that these verses may be a later addition: and it is noteworthy that the parallels with the Book of Jeremiah occur almost exclusively in *vv.* 9–18, while the first and third divisions resemble Psalms which have been shown to be regarded as Davidic. But the change of tone may only correspond to a change of situation.

The latter part of the Psalm has several parallels with Ps. xxviii. With *v.* 21 *a* comp. xxviii. 6 *a*; with *v.* 22 *b* cp. xxviii. 2, 6; with *v.* 23 cp. xxviii. 4. Comp. too *v.* 22 (*as for me*) with xxx. 6; and the invitation in *v.* 23 with xxx. 4.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

31 In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust;
Let me never be ashamed:
Deliver me in thy righteousness.
2 Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily:
Be thou my strong rock,
For a house of defence to save me.
3 For thou *art* my rock and my fortress;
Therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.
4 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me:
For thou *art* my strength.

1—8. The prayer of faith. *vv.* 1–3 are repeated in that beautiful mosaic, Ps. lxxi; and *v.* 1 *a* forms the close of the *Te Deum*.

1. *do I put my trust*] **Have I taken refuge.** Cp. vii. 1 (note); xi. 1; xvi. 1; xxv. 20.

let me never be ashamed] Disappointed and confounded by finding that my trust was vain. Cp. *v.* 17; xxv. 2, 20; xxii. 5.

in thy righteousness] To desert His servant (*v.* 16) would be inconsistent with Jehovah's righteousness.

2. *Bow down*] Or, *incline*, as in xvii. 6; &c.

2, 3. *Be thou* &c.] Lit. *Become* (LXX γενοῦ) *to me a stronghold-rock, a fortress-house to save me: for* (he goes on to give the ground of his prayer) *thou art my cliff and my fortress:* i.e. prove Thyself to be what I know Thou art. "It is the logic of every believing prayer." *Delitzsch*. For the figures see note on xviii. 2.

therefore &c.] **And for thy name's sake thou wilt lead me and guide me.** A further expression of trust rather than a petition. By gentle and unerring guidance God will shew Himself all that He has declared Himself to be. Cp. the same words in xxiii. 2, 3, and see notes there.

4. Thou wilt bring me out of the net...for thou art my strong hold. He compares his insidious enemies to hunters or fowlers, as in ix. 15; xxv. 15.

Into thine hand I commit my spirit: 5
Thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.
I have hated them that regard lying vanities: 6
But I trust in the LORD.
I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: 7
For thou hast considered my trouble;
Thou hast known my soul in adversities;
And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy:

5 *I commit* &c.] Or, as P.B.V. and R.V., **I commend my spirit.** To God's care he commits as a precious deposit the life inbreathed by God Himself (Job x. 12; xxii. 1). The context makes it plain that it is for the preservation of his life that he thus entrusts himself to God; but the further application of the words to the departing spirit is obvious and natural, and it is sanctioned and consecrated by our Lord's use of them on the Cross (Luke xxiii. 46). Cp. the noble words of Wisdom iii. 1: "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God:" and John x. 28 f.: 2 Tim. i. 12; 1 Peter iv. 19 (noting how *a faithful Creator* corresponds to *thou God of truth* here). "The many instances *on record*, including St Polycarp, St Basil, Epiphanius of Pavia, St Bernard, St Louis, Huss, Columbus, Luther, and Melancthon—of Christians using these words at the approach of death, represent how many millions of unrecorded cases!" *Kay.*

The words, **Thou hast redeemed me, O LORD, thou God of truth,** give the double ground of this confidence, in his own past experience, and the known character of Jehovah as the God of faithfulness. *Redeem* primarily means *delivered* from temporal distress (2 Sam. iv. 9); but for the Christian the word must bear a deeper significance.

6. *I have hated*] Better as R.V., **I hate.** He disclaims all sympathy and fellowship with the worshippers of false gods. But the LXX, Vulg., Syr., Jer. read, thou hatest (cp. v. 5). This reading gives the contrast required by the next line, which must be rendered, **but as for me, I trust in Jehovah.**

that regard lying vanities] Cp. Jonah ii. 8. False gods are *vanities of nothingness*, having no real existence, and deluding their worshippers; the exact opposite of the *God of truth*, Who IS, and constantly proves His faithfulness (Deut. xxxii. 4, 21). *Vanity* is a common expression for false gods in Jeremiah (viii. 19; &c.). For *regard* = pay respect to, worship, see lix. 9 (A.V. *wait upon*); Hos. iv. 10 (A.V. *take heed to*).

7. Let me be glad and rejoice in thy lovingkindness:
For thou hast seen my affliction;
Thou hast taken knowledge of the distresses of my soul.

An entreaty, based upon past experience. Here, and in v. 8, as well as in 5 *b*, it is more natural to understand the perfect tenses to refer to past mercies, rather than as a confident anticipation of future deliverance. With the second line cp. ix. 13.

8. *hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy*] Hast not

Thou hast set my feet in a large room.

9 Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble:
Mine eye is consumed with grief, *yea*, my soul and my belly.
10 For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing:
My strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.
11 I was a reproach among all mine enemies,
But especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance:
They that did see me without fled from me.
12 I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind:
I am like a broken vessel.

surrendered me into his power. Cp. Deut. xxxii. 30; 1 Sam. xxiii. 11, 12 (A.V. *deliver up*).

thou hast set &c.] Lit. *thou hast made my feet to stand in a large* (or, *wide*) *place*; enabled me to move and act with freedom. Cp. iv. 1; xviii. 19; xxvi. 12. *Room* in A.V. = space, place.

9—18. The tone of the Psalm changes. The recollection of past mercies brings present suffering into sharper relief. "A sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things." This part of the Psalm reminds us of Ps. vi, and of Jeremiah's complaints.

9. Be gracious unto me, O Jehovah, for I am in distress:
Mine eye is wasted away because of provocation, yea, my soul and my body.

Cp. vi. 7 *a*; amplified here by the addition of *my soul and my body* (xliv. 25).

10. *grief*] R.V. sorrow, as in xiii. 2; Jer. viii. 18.

sighing] Or, *groaning*, as in vi. 6.

my strength &c.] My strength totters because of mine iniquity, and my bones are wasted away. There was then some sin which called for chastisement, or required the discipline of suffering. But the LXX, Syr., and Symmachus read *affliction* instead of *iniquity*. With the last clause cp. vi. 2 (*note*); xxxii. 3.

11. Because of all mine adversaries I am become a reproach,
Yea, unto my neighbours exceedingly. (R.V.)

The original is as awkward as the translation, and we should probably connect *because of all mine adversaries* with the previous verse, and read, *I am become a reproach unto my neighbours exceedingly*: or else, with Lagarde, Cheyne, and others, read *a shaking of head* (xliv. 14, cp. 13), in place of *exceedingly*. Cp. xxii. 6, 7; Jer. xx. 7, 8.

they that did see me &c.] Those who met him in public avoided him, afraid of incurring persecution themselves by any sign of sympathy.

12. As a dead man passes out of men's mind, so he is forgotten.

For I have heard the slander of many: 13
Fear *was* on every side:
While they took counsel together against me,
They devised to take away my life.
But I trusted in thee, O LORD: 14
I said, Thou *art* my God.
My times *are* in thy hand: 15
Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.
Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: 16
Save me for thy mercy's sake.
Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon 17
thee:
Let the wicked be ashamed, *and* let them be silent in the grave.
Let the lying lips be put to silence; 18
Which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

Cp. Job xix. 14. He is like a broken (lit. *perishing*) vessel, flung aside contemptuously and no more remembered. Cp. (though the phrase there is different) Jer. xxii. 28 (R.V.).

13. **For I have heard the defaming of many,**
Terror on every side (R.V.).

Jeremiah uses these very words to describe his plight (xx. 10). *Terror on every side* is a favourite phrase with him (vi. 25; xx. 3, 4; xlvi. 5; xlix. 29; Lam. ii. 22).

they devised &c.] Jer. xi. 19 ff.; xviii. 20 ff., supply an illustration.

14. Render:
But as for me, on thee do I trust O LORD:
I have said, &c.

Men turn from him, but he turns to God. Cp. *v.* 6; xvi. 2; cxl. 6.

15. *My times* &c.] Cp. 1 Chr. xxix. 30. The vicissitudes of my life are all under Thy control.

16. Comp. the paraphrase in P.B.V., *Shew thy servant the light of thy countenance:* and see note on iv. 6.

for thy mercy's sake] R.V. in thy lovingkindness, as in *vv.* 7, 21.

17. The prayer of *v.* 1 is repeated. While my prayers are answered, let my enemies be silenced and consigned to Sheol. A similar prayer in xxv. 2, 3; Jer. xvii. 18.

18. **Let the lying lips be dumb;**
Which speak against the righteous arrogantly,
In pride and contempt.

Cp. xii. 3; xciv. 4.

19 O how great *is* thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee;
Which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee
Before the sons of men!
20 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man:
Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.
21 Blessed *be* the LORD: for he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city.
22 For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes:
Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.

19—24. Can the author of this serenely joyous thanksgiving be the despised and downcast sufferer of vv. 9—18? If so, it was surely not at the same moment. An interval has elapsed; his prayer has been answered; the danger is past.

19, 20. God's goodness to those who fear Him is like an inexhaustible treasure stored up, and at the proper time brought out and used for *them that take refuge* (as v. 1) in Him; and this publicly in the sight of man. Cf. xxiii. 5. With R.V. place a comma after *trust in thee*, and connect *before the sons of men* with *wrought*.

20. **Thou shalt hide them in the hiding-place of thy presence from the plottings of man:**
Thou shalt conceal them in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

With the whole verse cp. xxvii. 5; but *the hiding place of thy tent* is here spiritualised into *the hiding place of thy presence* (lit. *face* as in v. 16). No darkness of evil can penetrate into the light of God's countenance.

21, 22. Thanksgiving: but is it for deliverance anticipated by faith or for deliverance already experienced? Surely the latter.

21. *Blessed be the* LORD] Cp. xxviii. 6.

he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness] Lit. *he hath made marvellous his lovingkindness to me*, as in xvii. 7.

in a strong city] Either, *as in a strong city*, putting me out of the reach of my enemies as it were in a fortified city; or, *as a strong city*, proving Himself my fortress (xxx. 2, 3). The words may also mean *in a besieged city*, which might be taken as a metaphor for trouble generally. Some commentators understand the words literally of David's escape from Keilah, or of his establishment in Ziklag: or of Jeremiah in Jerusalem during the siege.

22. *For I said* &c.] But as for me, I said in my haste (or, *alarm*). Humbly he confesses his want of faith in the hour of trial, when he thought himself out of God's sight, and contrasts it with God's goodness. Cp. xxx. 6; cxvi. 11. With 22*a* cp. Jon. ii. 4: with 22*b* cp. xxviii. 2.

O love the LORD, all ye his saints:
For the LORD preserveth the faithful,
And plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.
Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart,
All ye that hope in the LORD.

23, 24. Concluding exhortation to the faithful. Cp. xxx. 4; xxvii. 14; xxxii. 11.

preserveth the faithful] Or, *keepeth faithfulness*. Cf. Ex. xxxiv. 7, note.

plentifully rewardeth the proud doer] The judgment of the wicked is, in the view of the O. T., the necessary complement of the triumph of the saints. See Introd. p. xci.

24. Be strong, and let your heart take courage (R.V.), as in xxvii. 14.

all ye that hope in the LORD] Or, *wait for*. The phrase links this Psalm to Ps. xxxiii. See *vv.* 18, 22. Comp. too xxxiii. 18 with *v.* 22.

PSALM XXXII.

With a fervour which is unmistakably the fruit of experience the Psalmist describes the blessedness of forgiveness, and teaches that penitence is the indispensable condition for receiving it (1, 2). He had sinned grievously, and so long as he refused to acknowledge his sin he suffered inward torture (3, 4). But confession brought instant pardon (5). Arguing then from his own experience he exhorts the godly to timely prayer (6). Professing his trust in Jehovah, he receives from Him a gracious promise of guidance (7, 8). Then addressing himself to men in general, he warns them against the folly of resisting God's will (9), and contrasts the lot of the godly and the wicked (10). The Psalm concludes with an exhortation to the righteous to rejoice (11).

This Psalm is generally thought to have been composed by David after his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. For almost a year he stubbornly refused to acknowledge his sin, in spite of the accusing voice of conscience, and, it may be, the admonitions of sickness (*vv.* 3, 4); until the prophet's message struck home to his heart, and opened the fountain of penitential tears. Ps. li may be the first heart-felt prayer for pardon; while this Psalm, written somewhat later, when he had had time calmly to survey the past, records his experience for the warning and instruction of others, in fulfilment of the promise in li. 13.

The lessons of the Psalm are summed up in Prov. xxviii. 13; or 1 John i. 8, 9.

It is the second of the seven 'Penitential Psalms' (see Introd. to Ps. vi), and is appointed for use on Ash-Wednesday. It was a favourite with St Augustine, who "often read this Psalm with weeping heart and eyes, and before his death had it written upon the wall which was over against his sick-bed, that he might be exercised and comforted by it in

his sickness." The words "intelligentia prima est ut te noris peccatorem" — the beginning of knowledge is to know thyself to be a sinner — might be prefixed to it as a motto.

A Psalm of David, Maschil.

32 Blessed *is he* whose transgression *is* forgiven,
whose sin *is* covered.
2 Blessed *is* the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity,
And in whose spirit *there is* no guile.
3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old
Through my roaring all the day long.
4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me:
My moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

On the title *Maschil* see Introd. p. xix.

1, 2. The blessedness of forgiveness. See Rom. iv. 6 ff. for St Paul's use of these verses.

Blessed] Or, *Happy*. Cp. i. 1. The first beatitude of the Psalter is pronounced on an upright life; but since "there is no man that sinneth not" (1 Kings viii. 46), there is another beatitude reserved for true penitence.

transgression ... iniquity] The words thus rendered describe sin in different aspects (1) as rebellion, or breaking away from God: (2) as wandering from the way, or missing the mark: (3) as depravity, or moral distortion. Cp. *v.* 5; li. 1—3; Ex. xxxiv. 7. Forgiveness is also triply described (1) as the taking away of a burden; cp. John i. 29, and the expression "to bear iniquity": (2) as covering, so that the foulness of sin no longer meets the eye of the judge and calls for punishment; (3) as the cancelling of a debt, which is no longer reckoned against the offender: cp. 2 Sam. xix. 19.

and in whose spirit there is no guile] No deceitfulness. The condition of forgiveness on man's part is absolute sincerity. There must be no attempt to deceive self or God. Cp. 1 John i. 8.

3, 4. The illustration of this truth from the Psalmist's own experience. He kept silence refusing to acknowledge his sin to himself and to God; but meanwhile God did not leave him to himself (Job xxxiii. 16 ff.); His chastening hand was heavy upon him (xxxviii. 2; xxxix. 10), making itself felt partly by the remorse of conscience, partly perhaps by actual sickness. He suffered and complained (xxii. 1; xxxviii. 8); but such complaint was no prayer (Hos. vii. 14), and brought no relief, while he would not confess his sin.

my bones] See note on vi. 2.

my moisture &c.] R.V. my moisture was changed as with (marg., *into*) the drought of summer: the vital sap and juices of his body were dried up by the burning fever within him. Cp. xxii. 15; Prov. xvii. 22.

Selah] The musical interlude here may have expressed the Psalmist's distress of mind, and prepared the way for the change in the next verse.

I acknowledged my sin unto thee, 5
And mine iniquity have I not hid.
I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD;
And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.
For this shall every one *that is* godly pray unto thee in a 6
time when thou mayest be found:
Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come
nigh unto him.
Thou *art* my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from 7
trouble;
Thou shalt compass me about *with* songs of deliverance.
Selah.

5. The way of restoration. Lit. *I began to make known to thee my sin, and mine iniquity did I not cover.* The tense of the first verb graphically represents the confession being made (xxv. 8, note): the second verb is the same as that in *v.* 1. Not until man ceases to hide his sin will it be hidden from God. "Quantum tibi non peperceris," says Tertullian, quoted by Abp. Leighton, "tantum tibi parcet Deus." "The less you spare yourself, the more will God spare you."

and thou forgavest] THOU is emphatic, and the form of the sentence expresses the immediateness of the pardon. "Vox nondum est in ore et vulnus sanatur." *St Augustine.*

The musical interlude may have expressed the joy of forgiveness, and served to separate this record of experience from the application which follows.

6. An exhortation based upon experience.

For this &c.] Rather, **Therefore let every one** &c.

in a time when thou mayest be found] This is the most probable explanation of the Heb., which means literally *in a time of finding*, and is obscure from its brevity. So "in a time of acceptance" (lxix. 13). Comp. Deut. iv. 29 with Jer. xxix. 13; and see Is. lv. 6. Let no one delay, for there is also a time of *not* finding (Prov. i. 28). The words may also be explained as in R.V. marg., *in the time of finding out* sin, when God makes inquisition; cp. xvii. 3; or, *in the time when* sin *finds* them *out*; cp. Num. xxxii. 23: but these explanations are less obvious.

surely &c.] R.V., surely when the great waters overflow they shall not reach unto him. In a time of calamity and judgement he will not be overwhelmed, but will be safe like one who stands secure upon a rock out of reach of the raging flood. For the figure cp. xviii. 16; Is. xxviii. 2, 17; xxx. 28; Nah. i. 8.

7. The Psalmist addresses Jehovah, appropriating to himself the promise of the preceding verse.

my hiding place] The same word as in xxvii. 5; xxxi. 20; xci. 1.

thou shalt preserve me &c.] Thou wilt guard me (xii. 7; xxv. 21; xxxi. 23) from distress (xxxi. 9); thou wilt compass me about with

8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou
shalt go:
I will guide thee with mine eye.
9 Be ye not as the horse,
Or as the mule, *which have* no understanding:
Whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle,
Lest *they* come near unto thee.
10 Many sorrows *shall be* to the wicked:

shouts (*v.* 11) **of deliverance.** Occasions for rejoicing arise wherever he turns: or possibly the glad shouts of the godly rejoicing at his deliverance are meant.

8. Who is the speaker? The Psalmist or God? Most commentators suppose that it is the Psalmist, who now assumes the part of teacher, as in xxxiv. 11, and fulfils the promise of li. 13. But surely it must be God who speaks in answer to the Psalmist's profession of trust.

Would any human teacher venture to say, **I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee**, as the last line must be rendered with R.V.? For the ever-wakeful 'eye' of God's loving Providence see xxxiii. 18; xxxiv. 15; Jer. xxiv. 6. The view that God is the speaker is confirmed by the parallels in xxv. 8, 12; xvi. 7; lxxiii. 24; and it avoids the abruptness of the transition from *v.* 7 to *v.* 8, and the awkwardness of the change to the plural in *v.* 9, which the other explanation involves.

9, 10. A warning addressed to all not to resist God's will, and neglect instruction.

Be not like horse like mule with no understanding,
With trappings of bit and bridle must they be curbed:
Else will they not come near unto thee.

The Heb. is obscure and possibly corrupt in some points; but the general sense is clear. Brute animals without reason must be controlled and compelled by force to learn to submit to man's will. If man will not draw near to God and obey Him of his own free will, he lowers himself to the level of a brute, and must expect to be treated accordingly and disciplined by judgment (Is. xxvi. 9—11).

For the thought that man who will not listen to God's teaching 'becomes brutish' see Jer. x. 14, 21; Ps. xlix. 10, 12, 20; lxxiii. 22. The word rendered *mouth* in A.V., *trappings* in R.V., is of doubtful meaning. Some explain, *whose* **wild spirit** *must be curbed* &c.; but this is less probable. The A.V. of the last line, *lest they come near unto thee*, to hurt thee, gives no suitable point of comparison, and must certainly be rejected.

10. The warning given in the preceding verse is confirmed by the contrast between the lot of the ungodly and the faithful.

many sorrows] Calamities and chastisements. The LXX has μάστιγες, *scourges*. Cp. Job xxxiii. 19.

But he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.

Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: 11
And shout for joy, all *ye that are* upright in heart.

mercy] **Lovingkindness** (xxxi. 7, 16, 21; xxxiii. 5, 18, 22). The clause may also be rendered, *with lovingkindness will he compass him about*. Cp. *v.* 7.

11. Cp. v. 11; xxxiii. 1; Neh. viii. 10; Phil. iii. 1, iv. 4; 1 Thess. v. 16. All kindred spirits must share the joy of a pardoned soul, and rejoice in the contemplation of God's gracious dealings with His people.

PSALM XXXIII.

The Psalm begins by repeating the call to praise with which the preceding Psalm closed, and recites the grounds on which Jehovah is worthy to be praised. It stands here as an answer to the invitation of xxxii. 11, an example of the "songs of deliverance" spoken of in xxxii. 7. Yet it differs widely in character from Ps. xxxii. That Psalm is an instruction based upon a particular personal experience; this is a congregational hymn of praise, arising (if indeed any special event inspired it) out of some national deliverance.

Contrary to the general rule in Book I (Introd. p. liii), it has no title in the Hebrew, though the LXX ascribes it to David.

It may commemorate some national deliverance from heathen enemies (*vv.* 10, 11, 16 ff.), but it is impossible to fix its date or occasion. It does not, like cxlvii, which has many points of resemblance to it, contain clear references to the Restoration. There are echoes of it in Ps. cxliv, partly in later language.

The structure is symmetrical. To the introductory call to praise (1—3) corresponds the concluding profession of trust in Jehovah (20—22). Between these comes the main body of the Psalm, reciting the grounds upon which Jehovah is worthy of praise and trust. This falls into two equal parts. i. Generally, He is to be praised for His moral attributes (4, 5), for His creative Omnipotence (6—9), for His sovereign rule (10, 11). ii. Specially, He is to be praised for His choice and care of His people in the midst of the nations (12—15); material force is a delusion (16, 17), but He is the sure Protector of His people (18, 19). Verses 4—19 are arranged in couplets or in quatrains.

Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: 33

1—3. Introductory call to praise.

1. *Rejoice*] **Shout for joy**: the same verb as in xxxii. 11 *b*, though in a different form. As in that verse, *the righteous* and *the upright*, the true Israelites, are addressed. Praise is their duty and their honour: in their mouths alone is it seemly.

For praise is comely for the upright.
2 Praise the LORD with harp:
Sing unto him with the psaltery *and* an instrument of ten strings.
3 Sing unto him a new song;
Play skilfully with a loud noise.
4 For the word of the LORD *is* right;
And all his works *are done* in truth.
5 He loveth righteousness and judgment:
The earth is full *of* the goodness of the LORD.
6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made;
And all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

for *praise &c.*] Omit *for*. Cp. cxlvii. 1 *b*.

2. **Give thanks unto the LORD with harp:**
Sing praises unto him with the psaltery of ten strings (R.V.).
The harp and psaltery were both stringed instruments, differing somewhat in form.

3. *a new song*] Fresh mercies demand a fresh expression of gratitude. See xl. 3; and cp. xcvi. 1; xcviii. 1; cxlix. 1; Is. xlii. 10; Judith xvi. 13; Rev. v. 9. Ps. cxliv. 9 reproduces 2 *b*, and 3 *a*.

with a loud noise] Referring either to the music itself, or to the accompanying shouts of joy. See note on xxvii. 6, where the same word is rendered *joy* in A.V.

4—11. The grounds of praise.

4, 5. The moral attributes of Jehovah. Jehovah's word is **upright**: the same word as in *v.* 1; cp. xix. 8; xxv. 8; xcii. 15; Hos. xiv. 9: **and all his work is in faithfulness**: cp. Deut. xxxii. 4; Ps. xxxvi. 5; xcii. 2. *Word* and *work* need not be limited; they include all the expressions of the Will of Him Who is always consistent with Himself (James i. 17).

5. *Righteousness* is the principle of justice; *judgment* the application of it in act. Cp. xxxvi. 6; ciii. 6; and for *loveth* cp. xi. 7.

goodness] Better, as R.V., **lovingkindness**. This line recurs in cxix. 64.

6—9. Jehovah's creative omnipotence. Word is the expression of thought; command of will: He had but to think and will, and the Universe came into being.

6. *The breath of his mouth* is synonymous with *the word of the LORD*: together they represent *and God said* in Gen. i. 3 ff. The parallelism and the addition *of his mouth* seem to exclude a reference to *the spirit of God* in Gen. i. 2, though the word in the original is the same. The germ of the doctrine of the Word in John i. 1, 3 may be found here, though of course the Psalmist had no idea of a personal Word. Cp. cvii. 20; and Ecclus. xliii. 26, "By his word all things consist." *The*

He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a heap;
He layeth up the depth in storehouses.
Let all the earth fear the LORD:
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.
For he spake, and it was *done;*
He commanded, and it stood fast.
The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought:
He maketh the devices of the people of none effect.
The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever,
The thoughts of his heart to all generations.

host of heaven (Gen. ii. 1) are the sun moon and stars, marching forth like an army in ordered array at God's command (Is. xl. 26).

7. The separation of land and water (Gen. i. 9, 10). The present tense *(gathereth...layeth up)* expresses the continued action of maintenance as well as the original creation. The comparison *as an heap* probably refers to the appearance of the sea from the shore, and may have been derived from Ex. xv. 8, cp. Josh. iii. 13, 16; Ps. lxxviii. 13.

But all the Ancient Versions render *as in a bottle*, reading נֹאד for *nēd*. To the infinite power of the Creator the heat of the sea is but as the water-skin which a man carries with him for a journey. See Is. xl. 12, 15. Cp. "the pitchers of heaven" (Job xxxviii. 37).

the depth] Better as R.V., the deeps: the vast masses of water stored away in subterranean abysses (Gen. vii. 11; Ps. lxxviii. 15). So we read of the storehouses of the wind (cxxxv. 7 = Jer. x. 13), of the snow and hail (Job xxxviii. 22).

8, 9. With what awe should man regard such an Almighty Creator! Cp. the argument of Amos iv. 13; v. 8; ix. 6. Emphasis is laid on the wonder of the method of creation, by the simple divine *fiat*.

9. For HE (emphatic) spake, and it was (cp. Gen. i. 3, 7, &c.): HE commanded and it stood; came into existence and stood there before Him ready to obey His command: or simply, stood firm. Cp. cxlviii. 5; cxix. 90, 91; Is. xlviii. 13.

10, 11. Jehovah's sovereignty in the world.

10. *bringeth...maketh*] Or, *hath brought...hath made*, with particular reference to some recent event. But it agrees better with the argument of *vv.* 4—11 to regard the words as expressing a general truth, though quite possibly it had been verified by recent experience.

11. The A.V. obscures the parallelism between vv. 10 and 11. The counsel of the nations and the thoughts of the peoples are contrasted with the counsel of Jehovah and the thoughts of His heart. His counsel stands fast like His work in creation (cf. 9). Cp. Jer. xxviii. 20, 21. With *v.* 10, cp. Is. viii. 10; Neh. iv. 15; with *v.* 11, cp. Is. v. 19; xix. 17; xlvi. 10, 11; Mic. iv. 12; Is. lv. 8, 9; Jer. xxix. 11; and generally, Prov. xix. 21; xxi. 30. To us the words may suggest that "through the ages one increasing purpose runs," and point forward to

12 Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the LORD;
And the people *whom* he hath chosen for his own inheritance.
13 The LORD looketh from heaven;
He beholdeth all the sons of men.
14 From the place of his habitation he looketh
Upon all the inhabitants of the earth.
15 He fashioneth their hearts alike;
He considereth all their works.
16 There is no king saved by the multitude of a host:
A mighty *man* is not delivered by much strength.

"The one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves."

The addition in P.B.V., *and casteth out the counsels of princes*, is derived through the Vulg. from the LXX.

12—19. From the nations the Psalmist turns to the chosen people. Jehovah's care for Israel constitutes His special claim on their praise. Happy the nation which is the particular object of the choice and care of the omniscient observer of men.

12. *Blessed*] Or, happy; see note on i. 1. This 'beatitude' is based on Deut. xxxiii. 29; cp. Deut. iv. 6—8. The first line of the verse recurs (with some variations) in cxliv. 15; with the second cp. xxviii. 9.

13. 14. The Psalmist dwells upon Jehovah's all-seeing omniscience in order to emphasise the peculiar privilege of His people. Throned in heaven (1 Kings viii. 39 ff.) He surveys all mankind. Cp. xi. 4; xiv. 2; cii. 19, 20.

14. *looketh*] R.V. looketh forth; a rare word, different from that in v. 13.

15. **Even he who formeth the hearts of them all,**
Who considereth all their works.

He Who created man must know man's heart (xciv. 9). As God 'formed' man originally (Gen. ii. 7, 8), so He continues to 'form the hearts' of individuals and of races (Zech. xii. 1). All are in some sense subservient to His plan and purpose.

16—19. The delusiveness of material resources is contrasted with Jehovah's care for His people. The discomfiture of Pharaoh with his host and horses and chariots (Ex. xiv. 17; xv. 4) may have been in the poet's mind; and 'saved' again recalls Deut. xxxiii. 29.

16. **A king is not saved by a numerous host**; or, **by greatness of power**, including other forces beside forces of soldiers. See xx. 7; xliv. 3 ff.; lx. 11 f.; and comp. the noble expression of this truth in 1 Macc. iii. 19; "The victory of battle standeth not in the multitude of an host; but strength cometh from heaven."

A horse *is* a vain thing for safety: 17
Neither shall he deliver *any* by his great strength.
Behold, the eye of the LORD *is* upon them that fear him, 18
Upon them that hope in his mercy;
To deliver their soul from death, 19
And to keep them alive in famine.
Our soul waiteth for the LORD: 20
He *is* our help and our shield.
For our heart shall rejoice in him, 21
Because we have trusted in his holy name.
Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, 22
According as we hope in thee.

17. *A horse*—to the Israelites cavalry seemed the most formidable part of an army—*is but a vain thing*—lit. *a lie*, a delusion—*for safety*—for victory (xxi. 1): *neither can it give escape by the greatness of its power*: it cannot even secure its rider's escape in case of defeat. Cp. Prov. xxi. 31.

18. *the eye of the* LORD] Cp. xxxii. 8, note; xxxiv. 15; Ezra v. 5; Job xxxvi. 7; 1 Pet. iii. 12.

that hope in his mercy] Or, *that wait for his lovingkindness* (xxxi. 24).

19. *death*] Violent death by war or pestilence is meant, as the parallel line shews. Famine was a common scourge in Palestine (xxxvii. 19).

20—22. The people's concluding profession of patient trust and hope, corresponding to the introductory invitation of *vv.* 1—3, and springing naturally out of the consideration of Jehovah's character in *vv.* 12—19.

20. *waiteth*] R.V. **hath waited**; a different word from that in *vv.* 18, 22; found in the Psalter again only in cvi. 13; but used in Is. viii. 17; xxx. 18; lxiv. 4; &c.

our help and our shield] Cp. again Deut. xxxiii. 29, "the shield of thy help"; Ps. iii. 3; xxviii. 7; and cxv. 9, 10, 11.

21. *his holy name*] See note on xxx. 4.

22. **Let thy lovingkindness** (*vv.* 5, 18), **O LORD, be upon us,**
According as we have hoped in thee (or, *waited for thee*).

Comp. xxxi. 1, 24; Rom. v. 4, 5.

PSALM XXXIV.

Another song of praise (cp. *v.* 1 with xxxiii. 1). The Psalmist gratefully celebrates, and invites others to join him in celebrating, Jehovah's care for those who fear Him, manifested towards himself and many another afflicted saint (1—10). Then, assuming the tone of a teacher,

he sets forth the essential characteristics of the fear of Jehovah, and commends it by a consideration of the blessings which He bestows on those who fear Him (11—22).

The verses for the most part run in pairs.

The Psalm is closely related to Ps. xxv. Both are alphabetic Psalms, with the peculiarity that the verse beginning with *Vav* is omitted[1], and a supplementary verse beginning with *Pe* added at the end to make up the number of letters in the alphabet (22). For the ingenious though improbable conjecture that these verses record the names of the authors, see note on xxv. 22. Both Psalms moreover shew a striking affinity in thought and language to the Book of Proverbs; and this Psalm corresponds to Ps. xxv as thanksgiving to prayer.

The title assigns the Psalm to David, *when he feigned madness* (lit. *changed his reason*) *before Abimelech; and he drove him away, and he departed*. The incident referred to is related in 1 Sam. xxi. 11 ff., where however the Philistine king is called *Achish*. After Saul's massacre of the priests at Nob, David fled to Gath. It was a desperate expedient: he was discovered, and only escaped with his life by feigning madness. Ps. lvi is connected by its title with the same occasion.

Most modern commentators peremptorily reject the title as of no value. The Psalm, they think, does not suit the supposed occasion; it manifestly bears the stamp of a later age; and the scribe or compiler who prefixed the title took it from 1 Samuel, substituting Abimelech for Achish by a slip of memory.

It is however hard to suppose such ignorance or carelessness on the part of a compiler; and the facts that the title does not agree with 1 Sam., and that there is nothing in the Psalm to suggest that particular occasion, are really in favour of regarding the title as resting upon some independent authority, and not upon mere conjecture. Can it have been derived, as Delitzsch thinks, from the *Annals of David*, one of the older works from which the Book of Samuel was compiled? The difference in the names might easily be accounted for if Abimelech was a dynastic name or royal title, like Agag among the Amalekites, or Pharaoh in Egypt. Cp. Gen. xx; xxi; xxvi.

But it must be acknowledged that thought and style are those of the Book of Proverbs, and apparently of a later age. Was the Psalm written by some poet-sage, who thought of that perilous episode in David's life as one of the most striking illustrations of the truth which he wished to enforce?

It was one of the Eucharistic Psalms of the early Church; a use no doubt suggested by *v.* 8. See Bingham's *Antiq.* v. 460.

Vv. 1 and 15 connect the Psalm with xxxiii. 1 and 18; *v.* 7 links it to xxxv. 5, 6.

[1] In Dr Scrivener's edition, from which the text of the present edition is taken, the letter *Vav* is prefixed to the second line of *v.* 5. But throughout the Psalm each letter has a complete distich, and it is preferable to suppose that *Vav* is omitted as in Ps. xxv rather than that *He* and *Vav* have only a single line each.

A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed.

(א) I will bless the LORD at all times: 34 1
His praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth.
(ב) My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: 2
The humble shall hear *thereof*, and be glad.
(ג) O magnify the LORD with me, 3
And let us exalt his name together.
(ד) I sought the LORD, and he heard me, 4
And delivered me from all my fears.
(ה) They looked unto him, and were lightened: 5
(ו) And their faces were not ashamed.

1, 2. Resolution of praise.

1. *His praise*] Cp. xxxiii. 1.

2. *In the LORD* stands emphatically at the beginning of the sentence in the original; in Him, and not in any of the worldling's objects of self-congratulation (xlix. 6; Jer. ix. 23, 24), shall be my boast.

the humble &c.] Probably, *let the humble* (or, *meek*) *hear and be glad*. Cp. v. 11. He claims the sympathy of those who have learned humility in the school of suffering. See note on ix. 12.

3, 4. Addressing the humble, he invites them to join in thanksgiving for his deliverance.

3. *magnify*] Man *makes* God *great* by acknowledging and celebrating His greatness (Deut. xxxii. 3), and *exalts* His Name by confessing that He is supreme above all. See note on xxx. 1.

4. *When I sought Jehovah* (with earnest devotion, see note on xxiv. 6), *he answered me, and rescued me from all my terrors* (xxxi. 13).

5, 6. Such experience of Jehovah's help is not limited to the Psalmist.

5. *They looked* &c.] The subject is to be supplied from the verb. *They that looked unto him looked, and were brightened.* The earnest gaze of faith and confidence was not in vain. For the phrase cp. Is. xxxi. 1; and for illustration see Num. xxi. 9; Zech. xii. 10. The Heb. word for *brightened* is a rare word, found in Is. lx. 5 (R.V.); but this, not *flowed* unto him (A.V. marg.) is the right sense. In most editions *They flowed* is wrongly marked as the alternative to *They looked*. For the thought cp. xxxvi. 9.

were not ashamed] R.V. shall never be confounded, lit. *put to the blush* with disappointment: a word which has not met us before in the Psalter, but recurs twice in Ps. xxxv. (*vv.* 4, 26), and elsewhere.

The reading of the Massoretic text gives a fair sense, but the ancient Versions (except the Targum) read an imperative in the first clause, and *your faces* in the second. We should then render, *Look unto him*

6 (ז) This poor *man* cried, and the LORD heard *him*,
And saved him out of all his troubles.
7 (ח) The angel of the LORD encampeth
Round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.
8 (ט) O taste and see that the LORD *is* good:
Blessed *is* the man *that* trusteth in him.
9 (י) O fear the LORD, ye his saints:
For *there is* no want to them that fear him.
10 (כ) The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger:

and be brightened, that your faces may not be confounded. This reading is in itself probable, and is supported by grammatical considerations. The connexion of thought in *vv.* 5, 6 will then be exactly the same as in *vv.* 3, 4; an invitation, followed by the statement of a fact which supports it.

6. **This afflicted man** (see note on ix. 12) **called, and Jehovah heard, and saved him out of all his distresses.** Cp. *v.* 17; xxxi. 7. Does the poet point to himself, or to one here and another there who had been instances of God's protecting care?

7. *The angel of the LORD*] That mysterious Being who appears as Jehovah's representative in His intercourse with man, called also *the angel of His presence* (Is. lxiii. 9). See especially Ex. xxiii. 20 ff. Only here and in xxxv. 5, 6 is he mentioned in the Psalter. He protects those who fear Jehovah like an army encamping round a city to defend it (Zech. ix. 8); or perhaps, since he is 'the captain of Jehovah's host' (Josh. v. 14), he is to be thought of as surrounding them with the angelic legions at his command. See for illustration Gen. xxxii. 2 (God's *camp*); 2 Kings vi. 16 f. For an examination of the doctrine of the angel of the Lord see Oehler's *O. T. Theology*, §§ 59, 60.

8. *O taste* &c.] Make but trial, and you will perceive what His goodness is toward them who fear Him. Cp. xxvii. 13. The adaptation of the words in 1 Pet. ii. 3 follows the rendering of the LXX, ὅτι χρηστὸς ὁ Κύριος. It is significant that the words are there applied to *Christ*. See Bp. Westcott's *Hebrews*, pp. 89 ff.

blessed &c.] Or, *happy is the man that taketh refuge in him*. Cp. ii. 12; xxxii. 2; but the word for *man* here is a different one. It means properly *a strong man*, and suggests the thought that be he never so strong in himself, man's only true happiness is in dependence on Jehovah.

9, 10. His saints want for nothing.

9. *saints*] Not the word commonly so rendered, e.g. in xxx. 4; xxxi. 23; but as in xvi. 3, *holy ones*: those whose character corresponds to their calling as members of the holy nation (Ex. xix. 6; Lev. xi. 44, 45).

want] A word found here only in the Psalter, but eight times in Proverbs.

10. *The young lions*] Best understood literally, not as a metaphor

But they that seek the LORD shall not want any good *thing*.

(ל) Come, ye children, hearken unto me: 11
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
(מ) What man *is he that* desireth life, 12
And loveth *many* days, that *he* may see good?
(נ) Keep thy tongue from evil, 13
And thy lips from speaking guile.
(ס) Depart from evil, and do good; 14

for the rich (LXX πλούσιοι, though possibly from a different reading), or powerful oppressors (xxxv. 17). The sense is that the strongest beasts of prey, most capable of providing for themselves, may suffer want (Job iv. 11); not so God's people. Cp. xxiii. 1.

For the touching connexion of these words with St Columba's last hours see Ker's *Psalms in History and Biography*, p. 62. He was transcribing the Psalter, and at this verse he laid down his pen. "Here at the end of the page I must stop; what follows let Baithen write." "The last verse he had written," says his biographer Adamnan, "was very applicable to the saint who was about to depart, and to whom eternal good shall never be wanting; while the one that followeth is equally applicable to the father who succeeded him, the instructor of his spiritual children."

11 ff. If such are the blessings promised to those who fear the LORD, how essential to know what the fear of the LORD is! Accordingly the poet adopts the language of a teacher and addresses his *sons*. So the teacher in Prov. i—viii constantly addresses his disciples as *sons* (iv. 1), or *my son*.

11. *the fear of the LORD*] Including both the devout reverence which is essential to a right relation of man to God, and the conduct which it demands. The phrase is characteristic of Proverbs, occurring in that book almost as often as in all the rest of the O. T. See especially viii. 13; ix. 10; and cp. Is. xi. 2, 3; 1 Pet. i. 17.

12. The challenge with its answer in *vv.* 13, 14 is a vivid and forcible equivalent for *Whosoever desires...let him &c.* Cp. xxv. 12.

life] Not mere existence, but life worthy of the name (xvi. 11; xxx. 5); again a word characteristic of Proverbs, and connected there too with the fear of the LORD (xiv. 27; xix. 23; xxii. 4).

and *loveth*] Lit., *loving days for seeing good*, explaining and emphasising the preceding line. Cp. *v.* 10; iv. 6. *Days* = length of days (Prov. iii. 2; x. 27).

13. *Keep*] Guard. Cp. Prov. xiii. 3 (R. V.); xxi. 23; Ps. xxxix. 1; James iii. 2 ff.

guile] Deceit. Cp. xxxv. 20; xxxvi. 3.

14. The first line recurs in xxxvii. 27. Comp. the character of Job, the ideal righteous man (i. 1, 8; ii. 3); and Job xxviii. 28; Prov. xvi. 17.

Seek peace, and pursue it.

15 (ע) The eyes of the LORD *are* upon the righteous,
And his ears *are open* unto their cry.

16 (פ) The face of the LORD *is* against them that do evil,
To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

17 (צ) *The righteous* cry, and the LORD heareth,
And delivereth them out of all their troubles.

18 (ק) The LORD *is* nigh unto them that are of a broken heart;
And saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

pursue it] Do not be discouraged if it should need prolonged effort to overtake it. Cp. the *pursuit* of righteousness (Prov. xxi. 21; Is. li. 1); and see Rom. xiv. 19; Heb. xii. 14. In P.B.V. *eschew* and *ensue* are archaisms for *avoid* and *follow after*.

15 ff. The fear of the LORD is commended by the consideration of His favour toward the righteous, which is contrasted with His displeasure against the wicked.

15. With the first line cp. xxxiii. 18. More literally, **toward the righteous**, as R. V. renders here but not there, though the prepositions are the same.

his ears &c.] Lit., *his ears are toward their cry for help:* cp. *my cry for help was in his ears* (xviii. 6).

16. *The face of the LORD* means the manifestation of His Presence, either as here in wrath (cp. ix. 3), or as in Num. vi. 25, in blessing. See Oehler's *O. T. Theology*, § 57. Comp. "The LORD *looked forth* upon the host of the Egyptians...and discomfited them" (Ex. xiv. 24).

the remembrance of them] Or, *their memorial;* even the name by which they might be remembered. Cp. ix. 5, 6; Job xviii. 17. Contrast cxii. 6.

17. **They cried, and Jehovah heard;**
And rescued them out of all their distresses.

We may understand a subject from the verb, *they who cried cried*, as in *v.* 5, i.e., when any cried: or with LXX and Vulg. supply *the righteous*. (Had the LXX this reading, or did they merely insert the word from *v.* 15?) It is however possible that *vv.* 15 and 16 should be transposed, and then *the righteous* in *v.* 15 supplies the natural subject to *v.* 17. This transposition deserts the present order of the letters of the alphabet, but is justified by Lam. ii, iii, iv, and Prov. xxxi according to the LXX, where *Pē* precedes *Ayin*.

18. *nigh* &c.] Cp. cxix. 151; Is. l. 8; and the contrast, Ps. x. 1. *The broken in heart* and *crushed in spirit* are those who have been broken down and crushed by sorrow and suffering (cxlvii. 3; Is. lxi. 1; Jer. xxiii. 9); in whom, it is implied, affliction has borne fruit, and all

(ר) Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous: 19
But the LORD delivereth him out of them all.
(ש) He keepeth all his bones: 20
Not one of them is broken.
(ת) Evil shall slay the wicked: 21
And they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.
(פ) The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: 22
And none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

self-asserting pride has been subdued and replaced by true contrition and humility.

19. No exemption from *evils* is promised to the righteous man, but out of them all the LORD *rescues* him (*vv.* 4, 17).

20. As *breaking the bones* is a forcible metaphor for the torture of pain that racks the bodily framework (li. 8; Is. xxxviii. 13), or for cruel oppression (Mic. iii. 3), so *keeping* them denotes the safe preservation of the man's whole being. See note on vi. 2. This passage as well as Ex. xii. 46 may have been present to the Evangelist's mind as fulfilled in Christ (John xix. 36). The promise to the righteous man found an unexpectedly literal realisation in the passion of the perfectly Righteous One.

21. While the righteous is rescued out of all evils (*v.* 19), evil brings the wicked to his death. His evil ways work out their own punishment, and divine retribution overtakes him. (Rom. vi. 21, 23.)

21, 22. *shall be desolate*] R.V. shall be condemned; or, marg., *held guilty*. Cp. v. 10.

22. A second verse beginning with *Pe*, like xxv. 22, where see note.

PSALM XXXV.

Relentless enemies are seeking the Psalmist's life. Their hostility is groundless, and its maliciousness is aggravated by their ingratitude. He appeals to Jehovah to do him justice and deliver him.

Each of these points is strikingly illustrated by the narrative of David's persecution by Saul.

(1) Saul was seeking David's life. With *vv.* 4, 7, cp. 1 Sam. xx. 1; xxiii. 15; xxiv. 11; xxv. 29.

(2) Saul's enmity had been fomented by the malicious slanders of courtiers who were jealous of David; men with whom no doubt he had been on friendly terms at the court. Again and again he protests his innocence of the charges of disloyalty brought against him. With *vv.* 7, 11 ff., 19, cp. 1 Sam. xix. 5; xx. 1; xxiv. 9, 11; xxvi. 18, 19; and Saul's confession of ingratitude, xxiv. 17 ff.

(3) With the appeal to God as the judge, *vv.* 1, 23, 24, cp. 1 Sam. xxiv. 12, 15.

But it is not against Saul himself that the Psalm (as it is David's) is directed, but against the men who fomented Saul's insane jealousy.

Envious of David's sudden rise, they left no means untried to bring about his fall. Comp. Introd. to Ps. vii.

Attention has however been called to the points of contact with Jeremiah, and the Psalm has been attributed to him by some commentators. Thus *v.* 6 finds a parallel in Jer. xxiii. 12; *v.* 12 in Jer. xviii. 20, 22; *vv.* 21 *b*, 25 in Lam. ii. 16; &c. But it may well be questioned whether Jeremiah is not merely borrowing the language of the Psalm; and it should be noted that the military figures of *vv.* 1—3, which would not be natural for him, find no parallel in his book.

The Psalm falls into three divisions, each ending with a vow of thanksgiving.

i. *vv.* 1—10. Appeal to Jehovah to arm himself as the Psalmist's champion (1—3): prayer for the repulse and rout of his enemies (4—6), and for the recoil of their groundless hostility upon themselves (7, 8); with a concluding vow of thanksgiving (9, 10).

ii. *vv.* 11—18. The base ingratitude of his persecutors. They accuse him falsely, and return evil for good (11, 12); for while in their trouble he shewed the most friendly sympathy (13, 14), they requite him with slander and hatred (15, 16). Prayer for deliverance and vow of thanksgiving (17, 18).

iii. *vv.* 19—28. Renewed prayer that Jehovah will not allow such malignant and spiteful foes to triumph but will do him justice; that he and all who hold with him may rejoice in the manifestation of Jehovah's favour.

The points of contact with Pss. vii; xxii; xxxviii—xl; lxix; should be noticed.

On prayer for the destruction of enemies, see Introd. p. lxxxviii ff.

A Psalm of David.

35 Plead *my cause*, O LORD, with them that strive with me:
Fight against them that fight against me.
2 Take hold of shield and buckler,

1—3. Appeal to Jehovah to arm himself as the Psalmist's champion.

1. *Plead* my cause] There is as it were a suit between him and his enemies. He appeals to Jehovah the Judge to do him justice (cp. *vv.* 23, 24). But the court in which the cause is to be tried is the field of battle; and therefore (dropping the figure of a suit) he calls on Jehovah to arm on his behalf. So in ix. 4 victory is regarded as a judicial decision. Cp. 1 Sam. xxiv. 15; xxv. 39. The renderings **strive with them that strive with me** (R. V.); or, (as Is. xlix. 25), *contend with them that contend with me*, obscure this point, and miss the connexion with *v.* 23. *Plead my cause with them that implead me* (Cheyne) represents the original better.

2, 3. 'Anthropomorphic' language of remarkable boldness, expanding the idea of Jehovah as "a man of war" (Exod. xv. 3: cp. Deut. xxxii. 41 f.).

shield and buckler] See note on v. 12. The mention of both together is part of the poetical picture.

And stand up for mine help.
Draw out also the spear, and stop *the way* against them that 3
persecute me:
Say unto my soul, I *am* thy salvation.
Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after 4
my soul:
Let them be turned back and brought to confusion that
devise my hurt.
Let them be as chaff before the wind: 5
And let the angel of the LORD chase *them.*
Let their way be dark and slippery: 6
And let the angel of the LORD persecute them.

stand up for mine help] Rather. Arise as my help. Arise (see notes on iii. 7; vii. 6) in the character and capacity of my helper (xxvii. 9).

Draw out] From the armoury, or more probably from the spear-holder in which it was kept when not in use (Gr. δουροδόκη, Hom. *Od.* i. 128). The word is used of drawing a sword from its sheath (Ex. xv. 9).

stop the way] All the ancient versions render the word *sʿgor* as an imperative; and this gives a good sense. First the enemy are checked in their pursuit; then (*vv.* 4 ff.) put to flight. But an ellipse of *the way* is harsh; the verb *shut* is not so used elsewhere; and the preposition *against* seems to imply attack. Hence many modern commentators regard the word as the name of a weapon not mentioned elsewhere in the O. T., *battle-axe* (R. V. marg.) or, *dirk* (Cheyne); the equivalent of the *sagaris* mentioned by Greek historians as the characteristic weapon of Persians, Scythians, and other Asiatics.

that persecute me] Rather, that pursue me (R. V.). Cp. 1 Sam. xxiv. 14; &c.

say unto my soul &c.] Give me the comforting assurance of thy interposition for my deliverance. Cp. iii. 2, 8 and notes there. The primary meaning of the words is of course temporal not spiritual.

4—6. Prayer for the repulse and rout of his enemies. No doubt the language might be entirely figurative, but it is more naturally explained if a literal fulfilment was at least a possibility.

4. Ashamed and dishonoured be they that seek my life;
Turned back and confounded be they that devise my hurt.

For *that seek my life* (or, *soul*) cp. 1 Sam. xx. 1; &c. Let them be disappointed in their aim, repulsed with ignominy in their attack. Cp. *v.* 26; xl. 14; vi. 10.

5, 6. Let them be as chaff before the wind,
The angel of Jehovah thrusting them down.
Let their way be all dark and slippery,
The angel of Jehovah pursuing them.

A terrible picture of a pell-mell rout. Does it not read like a recollection of some incident in a warrior's life, perhaps some defeat of the

7 For without cause have they hid for me their net *in* a pit,
Which without cause they have digged for my soul.
8 Let destruction come upon him at unawares;
And let his net that he hath hid catch himself:
Into that *very* destruction let him fall.
9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD:
It shall rejoice in his salvation.
10 All my bones shall say,
LORD, who *is* like unto thee,

Philistines? Helpless as chaff before the wind (i. 4: lxxxiii. 13) they are driven headlong down a dark and slippery track, where they can neither see nor keep their footing, with the dread Angel smiting them down as they vainly strive to escape. "The tracks down the limestone hills of Palestine are often worn as smooth as marble" (*Kay*).

Most probably the participles should be transposed. *Pursuing* suits the image of the storm-driven chaff (Is. xvii. 13); *thrusting down* (xxxvi. 12; cxviii. 13; cxl. 4) agrees better with the picture of the stumbling fugitives. For *the angel of Jehovah* see note on xxxiv. 7. Cp. the reminiscence of this passage in Jeremiah xxiii. 12.

7, 8. The causelessness of their insidious enmity is the ground for such a prayer. May their schemes recoil on their own heads.

7. The word for *pit* must be transposed from the first line, where it is superfluous and awkward, to the second line, where it is required. Render

For without cause have they hid a net for me:
Without cause have they dug a pit for my soul (*life*).

The metaphors from the hunter's nets and pitfalls express the insidious character of their secret plots. Cp. again Jer. xviii. 20, 22.

8. Let his mischief recoil upon his own head. Cp. vii. 15; ix. 15; lvii. 6; and with the first line cp. Is. xlvii. 11. Does the singular individualise each one of the enemies, or particularise one above all the rest, or speak of them collectively in the mass? It is less easy to decide here than in vii. 2.

into that very destruction let him fall] R.V. renders, **With destruction let him fall therein**, retaining A.V. in the marg. But neither rendering is satisfactory; and it is possible (especially in view of the almost certain textual errors in *vv.* 5, 6, 7) that the original reading was, *and his pit that he hath dug, let him fall therein.*

9, 10. Rejoicing for deliverance.

10. *All my bones*] The bodily frame feels the thrill of joy as it feels the pain of sorrow. Cp. li. 8; and see note on vi. 2.

who is *like unto thee*] Incomparable for power and goodness. Cp. Ex. xv. 11; Mic. vii. 18.

Which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him,
Yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?
False witnesses did rise up; 11
They laid to my charge *things* that I knew not.
They rewarded me evil for good 12
To the spoiling of my soul.
But *as for* me, when they were sick, my clothing *was* sack- 13
cloth:
I humbled my soul with fasting;
And my prayer returned into mine own bosom.

the poor] The afflicted, often coupled with *the needy* (xxxvii. 14; xl. 17; lxxxvi. 1; &c.)

11—18. The causelessness of the Psalmist's persecution and the ingratitude of his persecutors are urged as reasons for God's interference on his behalf.

11. *False witnesses*] Rather, unrighteous, or, malicious, witnesses rise up; lit., *witnesses of violence*, as in Ex. xxiii. 1; Deut. xix. 16. Cp. Ps. xxvii. 12 (A.V. *cruelty*).

they laid to my charge &c.] R.V. they ask of me things that I know not: calling me to account for crimes, of which I have not even any knowledge. Cp. lxix. 4. The phraseology is that of a court; not that the Psalmist is to be thought of as actually put upon his trial. David was falsely and maliciously accused of treason and conspiracy against the king's life (1 Sam. xxiv. 9). Cp. Mt. xxvi. 59 ff.

12. *They rewarded* &c.] Better, as R.V., they reward. As in the preceding verse he speaks of what is still going on. His enemies are guilty of the basest ingratitude. Cp. xxxviii. 20; cix. 5; Prov. xvii. 13. Saul confessed that he had treated David thus (1 Sam. xxiv. 17 ff.).

to *the spoiling of my soul*] Render as R.V., to the bereaving of my soul: or perhaps, *it is bereavement to my soul*. Such conduct makes him feel as desolate as the childless mother.

13. The 'good' he had done to them. His sympathy when they were in trouble was no mere formality. He prayed for their recovery, humbling himself before God with mourning and fasting (lxix. 10, 11; 2 Sam. xii. 16; Joel ii. 12), that their sin might be forgiven and their sickness removed.

humbled] R.V., afflicted. It is the technical term for fasting in the Law. See Lev. xvi. 29, 31; xxiii. 27, 32; Num. xxix. 7; Is. lviii. 3, 5.

and my prayer returned into mine own bosom] An obscure phrase; not to be explained of the attitude of earnest prayer with head bent down on the bosom so that the prayer which came from his heart seemed to return thither again (1 Kings xviii. 42 does not justify this

14 I behaved myself as though *he had been* my friend *or* brother:
I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.
15 But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together:
Yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew *it* not;
They did tear *me*, and ceased not:
16 With hypocritical mockers in feasts,
They gnashed upon me *with* their teeth.

explanation): nor again, that his prayer returned to him without effecting its object (Matt. x. 13), for there would be no point in his prayer being unanswered: but rather, **my prayer shall return into mine own bosom.** They have recompensed him evil for good; but his prayer will not be unrewarded. As the causeless curse returns with interest into the bosom whence it issues (lxxix. 12), so the prayer at least brings back a blessing to its offerer (Jer. xviii. 20).

14. Better with R.V.,

I behaved myself as though it had been my friend or my brother:
I bowed down mourning, as one that bewaileth his mother.

Had they been his nearest and dearest, he could not have displayed deeper grief. The verse would be improved by a slight transposition (which is supported by xxxviii. 6), thus; *I bowed down* descriptive of the mourner's gait with the head bowed down by the load of sorrow)...*I went mourning* (like Lat. *squalidus*, of all the outward signs of grief, dark clothes, tear-stained unwashed face, untrimmed hair and beard—see 2 Sam. xix. 24).

15. But at my halting they rejoice, and gather themselves together. Limping, like stumbling, is a figure for misfortune. Cp. xxxviii. 17; Jer. xx. 10.

Yea, *the abjects*] The word rendered *abjects* is of doubtful meaning and possibly corrupt. (1) According to the rendering of A. V., retained by R.V., the sense is, that with his other enemies were associated the lowest outcasts, a rabble of men whom he knew not (Job xxx. 8 ff.); for the last words of the line must be rendered with R.V. marg., *and* those whom *I knew not*. (2) But the form of the sentence rather points to a description of the conduct of the men who have been mentioned already: so (retaining or slightly altering the present text), *they gather themselves together smiting me unawares*, or, *for things that I know not*. The wounds of slander are meant (Jer. xviii. 18). So the Targum: *wicked men who smite me with their words*. (3) Various emendations have been proposed. One that has found some favour, *strangers*, is foreign to the rest of the Psalm.

they did tear me &c.] **They rend me, and cease not.** Like beasts of prey (Hos. xiii. 8); or as we talk of tearing a man's reputation to shreds. 'Making *mouths*' in P. B. V. is a modernisation of 'making *mowes*', i.e. grimaces, which is found in the Great Bible and the early editions of the Prayer Book.

16. Like (less probably, *among*) **the profanest of mocking para-**

Lord, how long wilt thou look on?
Rescue my soul from their destructions,
My darling from the lions.
I will give thee thanks in the great congregation:
I will praise thee among much people.
Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me:
Neither let them wink *with* the eye that hate me without a cause.
For they speak not peace:
But they devise deceitful matters against *them that are* quiet in the land.
Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me,
And said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen *it.*

sites, they gnash &c.; a gesture of rage, as though they would devour their victim (*v.* 25). The obscure phrase in the first line is generally explained to mean *mockers for a cake*, buffoons who purchase entertainment for themselves by scurrilous jests (Gr. κνισσοκόλακες, ψωμοκόλακες, Lat. *buccellarii*). Another explanation is, *like* (or, *among*) *the profanest of perverse mockers.*

17, 18. A cry for help, and a vow of thanksgiving.

17. *wilt thou look on*] Lit. *wilt thou see*, as in *v.* 22, and not interfere. A.V. gives the sense rightly.

rescue my soul] Restore, lit., *bring back*, my life, for it is all but lost.

my darling] Lit. *my only one*, i.e. my precious life. See on xxii. 20. *The lions* are his savage persecutors (lvii. 4).

18. Another parallel to Ps. xxii, *vv.* 22, 25. Cp. xl. 9, 10.

much people] Or, *a mighty people* (R. V. marg.). The publicity of the thanksgiving is the point.

19—28. Renewed prayer in a somewhat calmer tone.

19. *wrongfully*] Lit., *falsely* (xxxviii. 19; lxix. 4); the grounds they allege for their enmity being untrue.

neither *let them wink*] The insertion of the negative is grammatically justifiable, and probably right; though the clause may also be rendered, *they wink* &c., describing the confederates' malicious signals of satisfaction at his misfortune (Prov. vi. 13; x. 10).

that hate me without a cause] Cp. lxix. 4. Our Lord refers to these words as 'fulfilled' in Himself (John xv. 25).

20. Their conduct is just the opposite of 'the fear of the LORD' (xxxiv. 13, 14). *For it is not peace that they speak, but against them that are quiet in the land they imagine words of guile*, accusing them of being 'troublers of Israel' and disturbers of the peace.

21. **And they open**...a gesture of contempt (Is. lvii. 4), rather than

22 *This* thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence:
O Lord, be not far from me.
23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment,
Even unto my cause, my God and my Lord.
24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness;
And let them not rejoice over me.
25 Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it:
Let them not say, We have swallowed him up.
26 Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together
that rejoice at mine hurt:
Let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify
themselves against me.
27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous
cause:
Yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified,
Which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.
28 And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness

of murderous intent (*v.* 25): **they say, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen**: seen its desire, seen the fall of the man whose rise excited our envy.

22. He turns their taunt into a plea: **Thou hast seen, O Jehovah.** Cp. *v.* 17, note.

keep not silence] The same word as in xxviii. 1, where R. V. renders, *be not thou deaf unto me.* With *be not far from me*, cp. xxii. 11; &c.

23. Arouse and awake for my judgement,
O my God and my Lord, for my cause.

Interpose to do me justice, and defend my cause. Cp. *v.* 1, and see note on vii. 6.

24. *Judge me*] Do me justice. Cp. vii. 8; and for the plea, *according to thy righteousness*, see vii. 17; xxxi. 1.

25. *Ah, so would we have it*] Lit. *Aha, our desire!*

We have swallowed him up] Destroying every trace of his existence. Cp. cxxiv. 3; Prov. i. 12; Lam. ii. 16.

26. A repetition of *v.* 4, with some variations, occurring again in xl. 14.

27. Cp. xl. 16.

that favour my righteous cause] Lit. *that delight in my righteousness;* that welcome the vindication of my innocence.

which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant] More exactly, which delighteth (2 Sam. xv. 26; Ps. xviii. 19, xxii. 8) **in the welfare** (lit. *peace*) **of his servant.**

28. *shall speak*] '*Shall speak musingly*, in the low murmur of one entranced by a sweet thought.' *Cheyne.*

of thy righteousness] For Jehovah's righteousness (*v.* 24) will have been manifested in delivering His servant.

And of thy praise all the day long.

all the day long] 'Tota die Deum laudare quis durat? Suggero remedium, unde tota die laudes Deum, si vis. Quidquid egeris bene age, et laudasti Deum.... In innocentia operum tuorum praepara te ad laudandum Deum tota die.' *St Augustine.*

PSALM XXXVI.

This Psalm presents two contrasted pictures: one of the godless principles and conduct of the man who has made deliberate choice of evil; the other of the universal and inexhaustible lovingkindness of God. From the prevailing wickedness around him (to which he is in danger of falling a victim, *v.* 11), the Psalmist turns for relief and comfort to contemplate the goodness of God. The wicked man may deny God's Providence and defy His judgements, but to the eye of faith His goodness is supreme, and His judicial righteousness will ultimately be triumphant. The contemplation of that goodness brings the folly of deserting God into strong relief, and suggests the greatness of the loss which man incurs by his apostasy.

The abruptness of the transition from *vv.* 1—4 to *vv.* 5 ff. has suggested the hypothesis that we have here parts of two Psalms, which have been combined by an editor. But the hypothesis is unnecessary. The two parts are related like the two members of an antithetic proverb (e.g. Prov. xiv. 22); and the reader is left to interpret the connexion for himself. Moreover the connexion of thought and language in *vv.* 11, 12 with *vv.* 1—4 is decidedly in favour of the unity of the Psalm.

The structure of the Psalm is clear and simple.

i. The principle of godlessness (1, 2), and the practical results to which it leads (3, 4).

ii. The gloriousness of God's attributes (5, 6), and His beneficence to man (7—9).

iii. Prayer for blessing (10), and protection (11); and confident anticipation of the overthrow of the wicked (12).

For the title *servant of the* LORD in the inscription comp. the inscription of Ps. xviii; and xxxv. 27.

To the chief Musician, *A Psalm* of David the servant of the LORD.

The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, 36
That there is no fear of God before his eyes.

1, 2. The ground of the godless man's security in his sin.

1. As the Psalmist reflects on the conduct of the wicked man, it becomes clear to him that practical atheism is the guiding principle of his life. So the reading of the Massoretic Text, followed in the A. V., may be explained. But it is unnatural to regard transgression as uttering its oracle in the Psalmist's heart; and the reading of the LXX, Vulg., Syr., and Jerome, within his heart, is certainly preferable. The verse

2 For he flattereth himself in his own eyes,
Until his iniquity be found to be hateful.
3 The words of his mouth *are* iniquity and deceit:
He hath left off to be wise, *and* to do good.

may then be rendered either (1), **Saith Transgression to the wicked within his heart,** (that) **there is** &c.; the second line giving the words of Transgression's oracle: or (2) **Transgression uttereth its oracle to the wicked within his heart; There is** &c.: the second line being the statement of the Psalmist, and hinting at the substance of the oracle.

The word rendered *saith*, or, *uttereth its oracle*, is regularly used of solemn divine utterances in the phrase *saith the LORD* (Gen. xxii. 16; and frequently in the prophets). Occasionally though rarely, it has a human speaker for its subject (Num. xxiv. 3 ff.; 2 Sam. xxiii. 1; Prov. xxx. 1). Transgression—more precisely, *rebellion* or *revolt*, v.,—is here personified (cp. Gen. iv. 7, R.V.; Zech. v. 8; Rom. vi. 12, 13, R.V.). The wicked man has made it his God, and it has become a lying spirit within him (1 Kings xxii. 21 ff.; 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12).

no fear of God] Rather, no terror of God. The word *pachad* denotes terror inspired by God, not reverence to God (Is. ii. 10, 19, 21, R.V.). Transgression persuades the wicked man that there is no need for him to dread God's judgements. Cp. x. 4, 5, 6, 11, 13: xiv. 1; and contrast Ps. xviii. 22; cxix. 120: Job xiii. 11; xxxi. 23. With these words St Paul sums up his description of the character and condition of fallen man in Rom. iii. 18.

2. A much disputed verse. Three renderings of the first line deserve consideration. (1) Taking the wicked man as the subject, we may render as the A. V. (2) Taking Transgression as the subject, we may render, **For It flattereth him in his eyes.** (3) Taking God as the subject, we may render, **For He flattereth him in his eyes.**

The third rendering, whether it is explained to mean, 'God treats him gently, so he imagines,' (Cheyne) or, 'God's threatenings seem to him mere idle words,' can hardly be supported by the usage of the word. The first agrees best with the reading *my heart* in *v.* 1, giving the ground of the Psalmist's conviction expressed there. But if the better reading, *his heart*, is adopted, the second rendering gives the best connexion. It explains how Transgression goes to work. It 'speaks smooth things and prophesies deceits' to him, *concerning the finding out of his iniquity and hating it*, i.e. as R. V.,

That his iniquity shall not be found out and be hated:

dragged to light in order to be punished, and exposed in its true hatefulness. The word *find out* is frequently used of detection with a view to punishment. See xvii. 3: 1 Kings i. 52.

3, 4. The fruits of this reckless atheism described.

3. *iniquity and deceit*] Cp. v. 5, 6; x. 7.

he hath left off &c.] Or, *he hath ceased to be wise to do good.* Cf. Jer. iv. 22. He inverts the prophetic exhortation, Is. i. 16, 17. The word here rendered *to be wise* is specially used of the intelligence which

He deviseth mischief upon his bed;
He setteth himself in a way *that is* not good;
He abhorreth not evil.
Thy mercy, O LORD, *is* in the heavens;
And thy faithfulness *reacheth* unto the clouds.
Thy righteousness *is* like the great mountains;
Thy judgments *are* a great deep:
O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.
How excellent *is* thy lovingkindness, O God!

leads to right and successful conduct. Cp. xiv. 2 (*understand*); ci. 2 (*behave myself wisely*).

4. *mischief*] **Iniquity**, as in *vv.* 3, 12.

upon his bed] In the stillness of the night, the time for repentance (iv. 4), and recollection of God (lxiii. 6), he is restlessly planning his crimes. For illustration see Mic. ii. 1 ff.

he setteth himself &c.] Evil courses are his deliberate choice; conscience is blunted, and wrong excites no abhorrence. Cp. i. 1; Prov. xvi. 29; Is. lxv. 2.

5—9. From the grievous spectacle of human perversity the Psalmist takes refuge in adoring contemplation of the character of God, the only source of life and light, who deals blessing liberally to all His creatures.

5. **O LORD, thy lovingkindness** *reacheth* **to the heavens;**
Thy faithfulness even unto the skies.

God's lovingkindness (*vv.* 7, 10) and faithfulness cannot be measured. For the comparison see Job xi. 8; xxii. 12; xxxv. 5: and cp. lvii. 10; ciii. 11: Eph. iii. 18.

6. Jehovah's righteousness—His faithfulness to His character and covenant (v. 8), manifested alike in mercy and in judgement—**is like the mountains of God** (*El*), immovably firm (cxi. 3), eternally unchanged, majestically conspicuous. God's works proclaim their Author, and reflect His attributes. Cp. civ. 16; lxv. 9; lxxx. 10. *The great mountains* is a paraphrase which obscures the meaning.

a great deep] Mysterious, unfathomable, inexhaustible, as the vast subterranean abyss of waters (xxxiii. 7; Gen. vii. 11; Job xxviii. 14; xxxviii. 16). Cp. Rom. xi. 33.

preservest] Or, *savest*. The lower animals are the objects of God's care as well as man. See civ. 14, 27, 28; cxlvii. 9; Jon. iv. 11; Matt. vi. 26 ff.; x. 29 ff.

7. *How excellent*] **How precious** (R.V.). It is the Psalmist's treasure. Cp. cxxxix. 17.

O God] The substitution of *God* for *Jehovah* is significant. The Psalmist is speaking of a love which extends beyond the limits of the chosen people, and embraces all mankind. *The children of men*—lit. *sons of man* (xiv. 2) are men regarded as earthborn and mortal in contrast to God.

Therefore the children of men put their trust under the
shadow of thy wings.
8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy
house;
And thou shalt make them drink *of* the river of thy pleasures.
9 For with thee *is* the fountain of life:
In thy light shall we see light.
10 O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee;
And thy righteousness to the upright in heart.
11 Let not the foot of pride come against me,
And let not the hand of the wicked remove me.

therefore &c.] And the children of men take refuge &c. (R. V.). Cp. xvii. 7, 8, note; Ruth ii. 12.

8. God is more than a protector. He is a bountiful host, who provides royal entertainment for His guests. Cp. xxii. 5, 6; xxvii. 4; lxv. 4. The metaphor is derived from the sacrificial meal, in which God receives the worshipper at His table[1] (Lev. vii. 15; Jer. xxxi. 14). That welcome is the sacramental expression of His relation to man.

the river of thy pleasures] Or, *the stream* (Am. v. 24) *of thy delights*: a different word from that in xvi. 11, and derived from the same root as *Eden*.

9. The expectation of *v.* 8 is no idle dream, for God is the source of life and light. From Him springs all that constitutes life (xxxiv. 12), physical and spiritual (cp. Jer. ii. 13; xvii. 13): from Him proceeds all that makes up true happiness (cp. iv. 6). Golden sayings like this anticipate the revelation of the Gospel. It is only in the light of the Incarnation that their depth of meaning begins to be understood. Cp. John i. 4, 9.

10—12. Concluding prayer for the continuance of God's lovingkindness and for protection from the wicked, with a confident anticipation of the final downfall of evil-doers. *v.* 10 springs naturally out of *vv.* 5—9, and *vv.* 11, 12 clearly revert to *vv.* 1—4.

10. A prayer for the continued exercise of the attributes which have been celebrated in *vv.* 5—9. All God's bounty to man flows from His lovingkindness, yet His righteousness also is concerned in the fulfilment of His covenant and promise.

them that know thee] With an effectual knowledge which must issue in loving obedience (ix. 10; xci. 14); and entitles its possessors to be called *upright in heart* (vii. 10; xi. 2; xxxii. 11).

11. Let me not be trampled under foot by proud oppressors, or driven from my home by wicked violence. This verse clearly refers to *vv.* 1—4. The Psalmist is himself in danger of falling a victim to the ruthless oppressors there described.

remove me] R. V. drive me away, from hearth and home to become

[1] See Bp. Westcott's *Hebrews*, p. 292.

There are the workers of iniquity fallen:
They are cast down, and shall not be able to rise. 12

a wanderer and a vagabond. The word may be used of exile (2 Kings xxi. 8; Jer. iv. 1); but there is not the slightest hint here of an impending invasion. What the Psalmist fears is treatment like that described in Mic. ii. 9, leaving him a homeless beggar (Job xv. 23; Ps. cix. 10).

12. With the eye of faith he beholds the certain and irreparable ruin of the "workers of iniquity" (*vv.* 3, 4: cp. v. 5; vi. 8; xiv. 4). *There* points to the scene of their discomfiture. Cp. xiv. 5; lxiv. 8.

they are cast down] R. V. **they are thrust down** (v. 10; xxxv. 5), and overthrown for ever. Cp. Is. xxvi. 14. Such judgements are an earnest of the final triumph (Rom. xvi. 20).

PSALM XXXVII.

In the preceding Psalm the Psalmist found relief and hope in the presence of high-handed iniquity by the contemplation of the inexhaustible lovingkindness of God. Here he assumes the character of a teacher, and bids the godly man not be disquieted by the sight of the prosperity of the wicked, for they are doomed to speedy destruction, while enduring happiness is in store for the righteous. "Hence Tertullian calls the Psalm, *providentiae speculum* (A mirror of providence), Isidore, *potio contra murmur* (An antidote to murmuring), Luther, *vestis piorum, cui adscriptum: Hic sanctorum patientia est* (A garment for the godly, with the inscription, 'Here is the patience of the saints')." *Delitzsch.*

The prosperity of the wicked was one of the enigmas of life which most sorely tried the faith of the godly Israelite[1]. No light had as yet been cast upon the problem by the revelation of a future state of rewards and punishments. Sometimes, as we see in Ps. lxxiii, he was in danger of losing all belief in the providential government of the world: at all times he was liable to be tempted to murmuring and envy.

It is with the more obvious and common danger that the Psalmist here deals. The consolation which he has to offer is of a simple and elementary kind. He affirms the popular doctrine of recompence and retribution which Job found so unsatisfactory. Trust in the LORD: wait His time: all will be well in the end: the wicked will be destroyed and the righteous rewarded. There is an element of truth in this doctrine, for God's judgements are constantly distinguishing between the righteous and the wicked (Mark x. 30; 1 Tim. iv. 8). The verdict of history and experience is, in the long run, in favour of righteousness. But the doctrine is inadequate, as Job felt, for retribution does not invariably and immediately overtake the wrong-doer in this world, nor is the righteous man always visibly rewarded.

In order, however, fairly to estimate the Psalmist's teaching and its value for those whom he addressed, we must bear in mind that personal individuality was comparatively unrecognised in early ages, while the solidarity of the family was realised to an extent which we find it hard

[1] See Oehler's *Old Testament Theology*, § 246.

to understand. A man lived on in his posterity: his posterity represented him: and the instincts of justice were satisfied if the law of retribution and recompence could be traced in the destinies of the family if not of the individual.

The consolation here offered was no doubt real to the mass of the Psalmist's contemporaries, in virtue of the element of truth which it contains. But it was only a partial and provisional solution of the problem. Through trials of faith and imperfect answers to their questionings God was on the one hand leading men to a truer ideal of happiness, on the other hand preparing them to receive the revelation of a future state of rewards and punishments. The author of Ps. lxxiii makes a distinct step forward. Though he still looks for the visible punishment of evil-doers, he is taught to find his own highest joy and comfort in fellowship with God, independently of the prospect of temporal felicity. The author of the Book of Job is carried still further, and forced to the conclusion that this world must be but one act in the drama of life.

The Psalm should be studied in connexion with Ps. lxxiii (cp. also Ps. xlix) and the Book of Job. The unquestioning confidence of the teacher who speaks here presents a striking contrast to the touching record in Ps. lxxiii of faith sorely tried but finally victorious.

The close relation of the Psalm to the Book of Proverbs must also be noticed. It forms a connecting link between lyric poetry and the proverbial philosophy of the 'Wise Men' whose teaching was such an important influence in Israel. See especially Prov. x. 27—32; xxiv. 15 ff. The promises of the Psalm should also be compared with the prophetic expectation of the Messianic age of peace and righteousness.

The Psalm is alphabetic in structure. The stanzas commence with the letters of the alphabet in regular succession, and usually consist of two distichs connected in sense. In three instances the stanza consists of a tristich instead of two distichs (*vv.* 7, 20, 34); and in three instances it consists of five lines (*vv.* 14, 15; 25, 26; 39, 40).

The same fundamental ideas recur throughout; but four symmetrical divisions of 11, 9, 11, 9 verses respectively, in each of which a particular thought is prominent, may be observed.

i. Counsel to avoid murmuring, and trust in Jehovah (1—11):
ii. For the triumph of the wicked is shortlived (12—20):
iii. And the reward of the righteous sure and abiding (21—31).
iv. The final contrast of retribution and recompence (32—40).

A Psalm of David.

37 (א) Fret not thyself because of evildoers,
Neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.

1—11. Warnings and counsels for times of temptation.

1, 2. Stanza of *Aleph*, stating the theme of the Psalm;—an exhortation against discontent and envy at the prosperity of the wicked, on the ground that it is only transitory.

1. *Fret not thyself*] Lit., *incense not thyself:* be not angry or indignant or discontented.

neither be thou envious &c.] Neither be envious of them that do

For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, 2
And wither as the green herb.

(ב) Trust in the LORD, and do good; 3
So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.
Delight thyself also in the LORD; 4
And he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

unrighteousness, and for the time prosper (*v.* 7). The severity of the temptation is attested by lxxiii. 3. The warning, repeated in *vv.* 7, 8, is found again in Prov. xxiv. 19. Cp. Prov. iii. 31; xxiii. 17; xxiv. 1. The phrase rendered in A. V. *workers of iniquity* is a different one from that in xxxvi. 12. It is the opposite of *doing good* (*vv.* 3, 27). The LXX rendering is τοὺς ποιοῦντας τὴν ἀνομίαν, words which occur in Matt. xiii. 41 in a context which should be compared with this Psalm. Cp. 1 John iii. 4.

2. *The grass* and *the green herb* are a common image for what is transient and perishable. See note on *v.* 20; and cp. xc. 5 f.; ciii. 15 f.; Is. xl. 6 ff.

be cut down] Or, *fade*. Cp. Job xiv. 2; xviii. 16 (R. V. marg.).

3, 4. Stanza of *Beth*. The antidote to envious discontent is patient trust in Jehovah, and perseverance in the path of duty. Render

Trust in Jehovah, and do good;
Dwell in the land, and follow after faithfulness:
So shalt thou delight thyself in Jehovah,
And he shall grant thee thy heart's petitions.

Remain in the land of promise where God has placed thee: "the land of Jehovah's presence, which has not only a glorious past, but a future rich in promise, and will finally become the inheritance of the true Israel in a more complete manner than under Joshua" (*Delitzsch*): there, and there alone, shalt thou find thy true satisfaction in Him. It would seem that the poorer Israelites, oppressed or driven from their homes by powerful neighbours (xxxvi. 11), were tempted to seek their fortunes in foreign lands, and forfeit their national and religious privileges. Cp. 1 Sam. xxvi. 19.

Here, as in *vv.* 9, 11, 22, 29, 34, *the land* is Canaan, the land of promise. The rendering of A. V. in *vv.* 9, 11, 22, *the earth*, is misleading so far as the primary meaning of the Psalm is concerned.

It is best to take *v.* 3 as virtually a series of conditions in the form of exhortations, and *v.* 4 as the promise depending on the fulfilment of the conditions. The A. V. *so shalt thou dwell*, &c., is inadmissible on grammatical grounds: and though it is possible to render *Delight thyself also* &c., in *v.* 4, the balance of the clauses, and the parallels in Job xxii. 26, Is. lviii. 14 are decisive in favour of the rendering, *so shalt thou delight thyself* &c. The renderings of the last clause of *v.* 3, *verily thou shalt be fed*, or, *feed securely* (R. V. marg.) are in themselves questionable, and fall to the ground when the true construction of the verses is adopted. With *follow after faithfulness* (R. V.) cp. cxix. 30 (R. V.).

5 (ג) Commit thy way unto the LORD;
Trust also in him; and he shall bring *it* to pass.
6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light,
And thy judgment as the noonday.

7 (ד) Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him:
Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth *in* his way,
Because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

8 (ה) Cease from anger, and forsake wrath:
Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.
9 For evildoers shall be cut off:
But those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.

5, 6. Stanza of *Gimel*. The reward of faith.

5. *Commit* &c.] Lit. *Roll thy way upon Jehovah:* shake off and devolve upon Him all the burden of anxiety for life's course. Cp. Prov. xvi. 3; 1 Pet. v. 7.

and he shall bring it *to pass*] With forcible brevity in the Heb. simply, **and HE** (emphatic) **will do** (*ipse faciet*, Vulg.) all that is needful. Cp. lii. 9; cxix. 126; 1 Thess. v. 24. This verse combines *vv.* 8 and 31 of Ps. xxii.

6. And he shall make thy righteousness go forth as the light,
And thy judgement as the brightness of the noonday.

The result of that divine working. The justice of thy cause has been hidden, but it shall shine forth like the sun rising out of the darkness of night; thy right has been obscured, but it shall be clear as the full light of the noonday. Cp. Job xi. 17; Prov. iv. 18; Is. lviii. 10; Matt. xiii. 43.

7. Stanza of *Daleth*. The remedy for impatience.

Rest in the LORD] Or, *Be still before* (Heb. *be silent to*) *the LORD* (R.V. marg.), in the calmness of faith. Cp. lxii. 1, 5; and for illustration see Is. vii. 4; xxx. 15.

who bringeth wicked devices to pass] Lit. *who doeth* (cp. *v.* 1 *b*, and contrast *vv.* 3, 5 *b*) *crafty devices.*

8, 9. Stanza of *He*. The warning of *vv.* 1, 2 repeated and emphasised.

8. Render with R.V., **Fret not thyself**, *it tendeth* **only to evil-doing**. Discontent is not only foolish and useless, but dangerous. It may lead the man who yields to it to deny God's providence, and cast in his lot with the evil-doers. See Ps. lxxiii. 2 ff., 13 ff.

9. *the earth*] Rather, as in *v.* 3, **the land**; and so in *vv.* 11, 22, 29, 34. As the nations were "cut off" before Israel (Deut. xii. 29; xix. 1), that Israel might possess the Promised Land, so will the wicked be destroyed, that the true Israel may have undisturbed enjoyment of their inheritance. Cp. xxv. 13.

(י) For yet a little while, and the wicked *shall* not *be:* 10
Yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it *shall* not *be.*
But the meek shall inherit the earth; 11
And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

(י) The wicked plotteth against the just, 12
And gnasheth upon him *with* his teeth.
The Lord shall laugh at him: 13
For he seeth that his day is coming.

(כ) The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent 14
their bow,
To cast down the poor and needy,
And to slay such as be of upright conversation.

10, 11. Stanza of *Vāv;* expanding the preceding verse.

10. Cp. *v.* 36: Is. xxix. 20.

his place] His abode. Cp. Job vii. 10; viii. 18; xx. 9.

and it shall *not* be] Better, as R.V., **and he shall not be.**

11. The promise is reaffirmed in a larger sense in the beatitude of Matt. v. 5, the language of which reproduces the rendering of the LXX here: *οἱ δὲ πραεῖς κληρονομήσουσιν γῆν.*

in the abundance of peace] Cp. lxxii. 7; cxix. 165; Is. xxxii. 17.

12—20. Disappointment and destruction are the destiny of the wicked.

12, 13. Stanza of *Zayin.* The impotent rage of the wicked.

12. **The wicked deviseth mischief against the righteous.** Cp. *vv.* 7, 32.

gnasheth &c.] Like a furious wild beast, eager to seize its prey. Cf. xxxv. 16.

13. **Doth laugh** (ii. 4 note)...**for he hath seen.** The punishment of the wicked has been foreseen and foreordained from the first.

his day] The appointed day of retribution and ruin. Cp. cxxxvii. 7; Obad. 12; 1 Sam. xxvi. 10; Job xviii. 20.

14, 15. Stanza of *Cheth.* The machinations of the wicked recoil upon themselves. Cp. vii. 15 ff.; ix. 15 ff.

14. *Sword* and *bow* are not merely figurative expressions for any means of inflicting injury. The Psalm deals with a state of society in which the poor and defenceless were in constant danger of actual violence (*v.* 32). Cp. Prov. i. 10 ff.

the poor and needy] Or, *the afflicted and needy.* See notes on ix. 12, 18: and cp. Am. viii. 4; Is. xxxii. 7; Jer. xxii. 16.

such as be of upright conversation] Lit. *the upright of way:* those whose life and conduct are upright. Cp. cxix. 1. The LXX however reads *upright in heart* (xxxvi. 10, and often).

15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart,
And their bows shall be broken.

16 (מ) A little that a righteous *man* hath
Is better than the riches of many wicked.
17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken:
But the LORD upholdeth the righteous.

18 (י) The LORD knoweth the days of the upright:
And their inheritance shall be for ever.
19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time:
And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

20 (כ) But the wicked shall perish,
And the enemies of the LORD *shall be* as the fat of lambs:

conversation, as in i. 23, has the obsolete sense of *manner of life, behaviour*.

16, 17. Stanza of *Têth*. The nature of true wealth.

16. **Better is a little that the righteous hath**
Than the abundance of many wicked. (R.V.)

Abundance, lit. *tumult* (a different word from that in *v.* 11), suggests the idea of noisy, ostentatious opulence. Cp. Prov. xv. 16; xvi. 8; and Tobit xii. 8; "a little with righteousness is better than much with unrighteousness." The P.B.V. *great riches of the ungodly* follows the LXX, Vulg. and Jer.: but the present Heb. text cannot be so rendered.

17. *For the arms* &c.] All the power which they have misused for evil will be rendered impotent. Cp. x. 15; Job xxxviii. 15.

upholdeth] When the wicked strives to make him fall (*vv.* 14), and at all times. See *vv.* 24, 31. Cp. iii. 5; liv. 4; lxxi. 6.

18, 19. Stanza of *Yôd*. Jehovah's care for the godly.

18. Jehovah knoweth, and the Omniscient is also the All-Sovereign (see on i. 6), the days of the perfect: each fraction of the lives of those who are devoted to Him (see on xv. 2), with all that it brings. Cp. *my times* (xxxi. 15); Matt. vi. 8.

and their inheritance shall be for ever] The righteous man lives in his posterity, who continue in possession of the ancestral inheritance, while the posterity of the wicked perish (*vv.* 28, 38; xxxiv. 16). The Psalmist's view is still limited to earth (cp. *v.* 19). The eternal inheritance reserved in heaven is beyond his horizon.

19. Cp. Job v. 19, 20.

in the evil time] R.V. in the time of evil, i.e. calamity.

20. Stanza of *Kaph*. The end of the wicked.

the enemies of the LORD] For His people's enemies are His enemies. Cp. xcii. 9.

as the fat of lambs] A rendering derived from the Targum. But the consumption of the fat of the sacrifice upon the altar would be a

They shall consume; into smoke shall they consume *away*.

(ל) The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: 21
But the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.
For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; 22
And they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.

(מ) The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: 23
And he delighteth in his way.

strange simile for the evanescence of the wicked: and we must render as the excellency of the pastures (R.V. m.), or, as the splendour of the meadows. The gay show of flowers, so quickly vanishing, is an apt emblem for the short-lived pomp of the wicked.

The force of the comparison is hardly realised in our moist northern climate, where verdure is perpetual. "But let a traveller ride over the downs of Bethlehem in February, one spangled carpet of brilliant flowers, and again in May, when all traces of verdure are gone; or let him push his horse through the deep solid growth of clovers and grasses in the valley of the Jordan in the early spring, and then return and gallop across a brown, hard-baked, gaping plain in June,...and the Scriptural imagery will come home to him with tenfold power." Tristram's *Natural History of the Bible*, p. 455. Cp. *v.* 2; Matt. vi. 29, 30; James i. 10, 11.

they shall consume &c. Lit. they are consumed; in smoke (or, *like smoke*) are they consumed away. *Smoke* is in itself a natural figure of speedy and complete disappearance (Hos. xiii. 3): possibly, however, the idea of the preceding line is continued, and we are to think of "the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven" (Matt. vi. 30). The perfect tense, as in xxxvi. 12, forcibly expresses the realising certainty of faith.

21—31. God's care for the righteous.

21, 22. Stanza of *Lamed*. The wicked are impoverished, while the righteous are enriched. Cp. Prov. iii. 33.

21. At first sight it may seem that the Psalmist intends to contrast the dishonesty of the wicked with the liberality of the righteous. But *v.* 22 makes it clear that this is not the meaning. Looking forward, he foresees the future which awaits them. He sees the wicked man falling into debt and forced to contract loans which he cannot repay, while the righteous man has enough and to spare, and makes a bountiful use of his wealth. The promise to Israel as a nation finds its analogy within the nation (Deut. xv. 6; xxviii. 12, 44).

sheweth mercy] Better as R.V., dealeth graciously. Cp. *v.* 26.

22. *For* &c.] The wicked man's ruin and the righteous man's ability to do good proceed respectively from the curse and the blessing of God.

23, 24. Stanza of *Mem*. God's directing and upholding care.

23. It seems best to take *v.* 23 in close connexion with *v.* 24, as (virtually) the condition of the promise:

24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down:
For the LORD upholdeth *him with* his hand.

25 (כ) I have been young, and *now* am old;
Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken,
Nor his seed begging bread.
26 *He is* ever merciful, and lendeth;
And his seed *is* blessed.

27 (ס) Depart from evil, and do good;
And dwell for evermore.
28 For the LORD loveth judgment,
And forsaketh not his saints;

> When a man's goings are established of Jehovah.
> And he delighteth in his way;
> Though he fall &c.

The second line may be understood of Jehovah's satisfaction in the good man's life (*He delighteth in his way*: cp. xviii. 19; xxii. 8); or of the good man's willing acceptance of Jehovah's guidance (*He delighteth in His way*). The latter explanation is supported by Prov. x. 29, which occurs in a context parallel to this Psalm. Cp. v. 34; cxix. 35.

24. *shall not be utterly cast down*] Or, shall not lie prostrate Cp. Prov. xxiv. 16.

upholdeth him with *his hand*] Better, as R. V. marg., upholdeth his hand. Cp. *v.* 17; Is. xli. 13; li. 18.

25, 26. Stanza of *Nun*. An appeal to the experience of a long life in confirmation of the preceding stanzas. He has never seen the righteous permanently deserted by God, or his children reduced to homeless beggary (cix. 10). Cp. *vv.* 28, 33; ix. 10; Gen. xxviii. 15. Temporary impoverishment and apparent abandonment for a time need not be supposed to be excluded.

26. All the day long he dealeth graciously and lendeth (R. V.). Cp. v. 21: cxii. 5. The righteous not only have abundance, but know how to use it (Is. xxxii. 5—8).

27, 28 *a*, *b*. Stanza of *Samech*.

27. Once more the teacher addresses his disciple, as in *v.* 3 ff. The first line is identical with xxxiv. 14 *a* (see note): the second line is virtually a promise, and might be rendered *so shalt thou dwell* &c. But as Delitzsch observes, the imperative retains its force in constructions of this type, as an exhortation to participate in the blessing by the fulfilment of the duty. Peaceable occupation of the land by successive generations is meant (cp. *v.* 29). The individual lives on in his descendants.

28 *a*. Cp. xxxiii. 5. For *saints* see note on iv. 3.

28 *c*, *d*, 29. Stanza of *Ayin*. The verses are wrongly divided. It is evident from the regular structure of the Psalm that the last two lines of *v.* 28 together with *v.* 29 should form a stanza commencing with the

(לע) They are preserved for ever:
But the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.
The righteous shall inherit the land, 29
And dwell therein for ever.

(פ) The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, 30
And his tongue talketh of judgment.

letter *Ayin*. If the Massoretic text is sound, the *Ayin* is represented by the second letter of the word *'ōlam*, 'for ever',—the prefixed preposition *l* being disregarded, as is the prefixed *and* in *v.* 39. But a comparison of the LXX makes it all but certain that the first word of the verse has been lost, and a further corruption taken place in consequence[1]; and that the original reading was:

The unrighteous are destroyed for ever,
And the seed of the wicked is cut off.

With this reading a full stop must of course be placed after *saints*, and the couplet forms the antithesis to *vv.* 29. The perfect tenses, as in *v.* 20 *a*, express the Psalmist's conviction of the certainty of the event. Cp. *v.* 38. The addition in the P. B. V., *the unrighteous shall be punished*, comes from the LXX through the Vulgate. See note below.

30, 31. Stanza of *Pē*. The secret of security.

30. The mouth of the righteous meditateth wisdom,
And his tongue speaketh judgement.

Cp. Prov. x. 31, 32. The word rendered *meditateth* combines the ideas of meditation and meditative discourse. Vulg. *meditabitur sapientiam*. Cp. **i. 2; xxxv. 28;** Josh. i. 8.

[1] The LXX reads thus: εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα φυλαχθήσονται· ἄνομοι δὲ ἐκδιωχθήσονται (ℵB ἄμωμοι ἐκδικηθήσονται), καὶ σπέρμα ἀσεβῶν ἐξολοθρευθήσεται, 'They shall be preserved for ever; but the lawless shall be driven out (ℵB, the perfect shall be avenged), and the seed of the ungodly shall be destroyed.' The reading of the Sinaitic and Vatican MSS. appears to be a correction or corruption, and must be abandoned in favour of that found in (apparently) all other MSS., and supported by the Vulg., *iniusti punientur*. We have then the words ἄνομοι δὲ ἐκδιωχθήσονται, *but the lawless shall be driven out*, in addition to a rendering of the Massoretic text. These words might represent an original עֲוֻלִים נִשְׁמְדוּ. If the original reading (written defectively) was עולם לעלם נשמדו, *the unrighteous are destroyed for ever*, the process of corruption is easily intelligible. עולם was omitted, either accidentally, from its resemblance to לעלם, or because the transcriber did not recognise a somewhat rare word, and supposed it to be an erroneous repetition. When once it had disappeared, the change of נשמדו (*destroyed*) into נשמרו (*preserved*) followed as a matter of course, 'his saints' in the preceding line being the only possible subject. The word עֲוֻלִים does not occur elsewhere in the Psalter, but is found four times in the Book of Job, with which this Psalm is so closely connected. Cp. too the substantive עַוְלָה in *v.* 1. A case like this, in which the acrostic structure of the Psalm demands a correction for which the LXX supplies clear evidence, is a convincing argument for the temperate employment of the LXX for the correction of the Massoretic Text. This or some similar correction is adopted by most editors.

31 The law of his God *is* in his heart;
None of his steps shall slide.

32 (צ) The wicked watcheth the righteous,
And seeketh to slay him.
33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand,
Nor condemn him when he is judged.

34 (ק) Wait on the LORD, and keep his way,
And he shall exalt thee to inherit the land:
When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see *it*.

35 (ר) I have seen the wicked in great power,
And spreading himself like a green bay tree.
36 Yet he passed away, and lo, he *was* not:
Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.

31. Cp. cxix. 11. God's law, treasured in his heart, regulates all his conduct. Without wavering or variation he pursues the path of right. Cp. xxvi. 1; lxxiii. 2.

32—40. The final contrast.

32, 33. Stanza of *Tsadi*. Malice defeated.

32. Cp. x. 8 ff.: Prov. i. 11 ff. The next verse shews that wrong by judicial corruption (Is. v. 23) as well as actual violence is meant.

33. *will not leave him*] Lit. *will not forsake him*, as in *v.* 28, and leave him *in the hand*, i.e. power, of the wicked.

nor condemn him &c.] Will not suffer him to be unjustly condemned. The explanation that though men may condemn him unjustly, God the supreme judge will acquit him, does not satisfy the context. The Psalmist looks for a temporal deliverance.

34. Stanza of *Qoph*. The Psalmist again addresses his disciple. For a while he may be crushed and down-trodden, but ultimately he will be exalted and the wicked cut off.

keep his way] Cp. *v.* 23, note; xviii. 21.

thou shalt see it] With satisfaction at the vindication of God's righteous government. Cp. lii. 6; lviii. 10, 11. See Introd. p. xci.

35, 36. Stanza of *Resh*. The transitoriness of the wicked. Cp. *v.* 10; lii. 5 ff.; Job viii. 16 ff.

35. *I have seen*] Comp. the similar appeal to experience in *v.* 25; and the close parallel in Job v. 3.

in great power] Or, **in his terribleness**, inspiring terror by tyrannical oppression. Cp. the cognate verb in x. 18 (R.V.).

like a green bay tree] R.V. **like a green tree in its native soil**, some deeply-rooted giant of the primeval forest, apparently secure from all danger of sudden disturbance.

36. *Yet he passed away*] R. V. **But one passed by.** Better, with LXX, Vulg., Syr., Jer.; **And I passed by.**

(שׁ) Mark the perfect *man*, and behold the upright : 37
For the end of *that* man *is* peace.
But the transgressors shall be destroyed together : 38
The end of the wicked shall be cut off.

(תּ) But the salvation of the righteous *is* of the LORD : 39
He is their strength in the time of trouble.
And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them : 40
He shall deliver them from the wicked,
And save them, because they trust in him.

37. 38. Stanza of *Shin*. The future of the wicked and the righteous.

Mark] I.e. observe. The P.B.V., *Keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing that is right*, follows the LXX, Vulg., Symm., Jer., Syr., Targ., in a doubtful rendering.

for the end &c.] R.V. **for the latter end** &c. But the marginal alternatives certainly give the right construction of the sentence: *there is a reward* (or, *future*, or, *posterity*) *for the man of peace*. *Acharīth* means 'an after', 'a sequel' (Prov. xxiii. 18; xxiv. 20): hence 'reward' or 'posterity'; and *v.* 38 points to the latter sense here. 'The man of peace' lives on in his posterity: the wicked man's family become extinct. P.B.V., *for that shall bring a man peace at the last*, appears to be a paraphrase of Jerome's *quia erit in extremum viro pax*.

38. But transgressors are destroyed together:
The posterity of the wicked is cut off.

Cp. *v.* 28; cix. 13; Job xviii. 13—21. To the Israelite, with his strong sense of the continuity of life in the family, childlessness or the loss of posterity was a virtual annihilation. In the light of N. T. revelation the contrast between the 'after' of the righteous and the wicked is still more solemn and significant.

39, 40. Stanza of *Tav*. Jehovah's faithfulness to His own.

39. *their strength*] R. V. **their strong-hold** (xxvii. 1); or perhaps *their asylum*.

40. And the LORD helpeth them, and rescueth them:
He rescueth them from the wicked, and saveth them,
Because they have taken refuge in him (R.V.).

PSALM XXXVIII.

Tortured by pain of body and anguish of mind, deserted by his friends, mocked and menaced by his enemies, the Psalmist lays his cause before God. In his sufferings he recognises the merited punishment of his sins: he submits to the insults of his enemies with a meek resignation which is a distinguishing feature of the Psalm. For the most part he simply pleads the extremity of his plight as an argument to move God's compassion: only at the opening and close does he directly ask for relief (*vv.* 1, 21, 22), and at the beginning of each division (*vv.* 9, 15), addresses God with words of faith and hope.

The Psalm is closely related to Ps. vi and Ps. xxxix. Delitzsch regards Pss. vi, xxxviii, li, xxxii, as a chronological series, the occasion of which was David's adultery with Bathsheba. Others suppose that it was written by Jeremiah, at the time when he was scourged and put in the stocks by Pashhur (Jer. xx). Others find in it the utterance, not of an individual, but of the nation. It is suffering Israel which confesses its sin, acknowledges the justice of its punishment, and appeals to the mercy of Jehovah.

The remarks already made on Ps. vi apply here. The allusions are not sufficiently definite to enable us to refer the Psalm to any particular author or occasion. The *application* of it, in liturgical use, to the nation, was easy and natural, but there is no hint that the speaker is other than an individual, who relates his own experience. The best illustration of the Psalm is to be found in Job's description of his sufferings[1], though the Psalmist's temper of mind differs absolutely from his: and the portraiture of Job, even if ideal, must have been intended to be, in the main, true to life. The striking parallels, and not less striking points of difference, between the Psalm and the portrait of the suffering servant of the Lord in Is. liii should also be studied.

This is the third of the 'Penitential Psalms,' in use on Ash-Wednesday.

The Psalm falls into three divisions, each beginning with an address to God; and the verses are generally arranged in pairs. The use of the divine names should be noted: first *Jehovah* (*v.* 1); then *Adonai* (*v.* 9); then both combined with the addition of *my God* (*v.* 15), and the three repeated (*vv.* 21, 22).

i. The Psalmist's bodily and mental sufferings described (1—8).
ii. The desertion of friends, and the threats of enemies (9—14).
iii. Pleadings for deliverance (15—22).

The title *to bring to remembrance*, prefixed also to Ps. lxx, has commonly been explained to refer to the contents of the Psalm, as a record of suffering, or as a prayer intended to bring the suppliant to God's remembrance. But more probably it should be rendered, *to make memorial* (R. V. marg.), or, *for making the memorial*, and explained as a note of the liturgical use of the Psalm either in connexion with the offering of incense, or at the offering of the *Azkara*. Comp. the phrase *to make a memorial of incense* (Is. lxvi. 3, marg.), and for the connexion of prayer and offering of incense see Num. xvi. 46 ff.: Luke i. 9, 10. The *Azkara* or *Memorial* was a technical term in the Levitical ritual (1) for the portion of the 'meal-offering' mixed with oil and burnt with incense on the altar (Lev. ii. 2); (2) for the incense placed on the shewbread and afterwards burnt (Lev. xxiv. 7). Though probably the term originally meant only 'a fragrant offering' (see Dillmann on Lev. ii. 2) it was interpreted to mean 'a memorial' (LXX. *μνημόσυνον*, Vulg. *memoriale*)

[1] See e.g. Job's description of his sickness, ch. vii. 5, ix. 17; God has attacked him, xvi. 12 ff.; and esp. cp. vi. 4, vii. 20, xvi. 12, 13, with *v.* 2 of the Ps.; he is deserted by friends, xvi. 20, xix. 13 ff.; insulted and even assaulted by enemies, xvi. 10 f., xvii. 2, 6, xxx. 9 ff., 12 ff.; he connects his sufferings with sin, though he knows of no special sin which can account for the severity of the punishment, vii. 21, x. 6, 14, xiii. 23, 26, xiv. 16, 17.

as bringing the offerer to God's remembrance. There may be an allusion to the use of Psalms in connexion with the *Azkara* in 1 Chr. xvi. 4, where *to celebrate* (R. V.) is the same word as that used here.

The LXX has "For a memorial for the Sabbath," an addition which confirms the liturgical explanation. The liturgical use must have arisen in days of national distress and persecution, such as the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (1 Macc. i): and implies the application of the Psalm to the nation.

A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.

O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: 38
Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.
For thine arrows stick fast in me, 2
And thy hand presseth me sore.
There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; 3
Neither *is there any* rest in my bones because of my sin.
For mine iniquities are gone *over* mine head: 4
As a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.
My wounds stink *and* are corrupt 5
Because of my foolishness.

1—8. The chastisement of sin.

1. In words almost identical with vi. 1 the Psalmist deprecates the severity of a chastisement which seems to proceed from an angry Judge rather than from a loving Father. The emphasis is on *in thy wrath... in thy hot displeasure.* Cp. Jer. x. 24. For similar expressions of a sense of guilt under suffering, see xxv. 18; xxxi. 10; xxxix. 10 ff.; xl. 12.

2. God's 'arrows' are His judgements in general (vii. 12: Deut. xxxii. 23); here in particular pain and sickness (Job vi. 4; xvi. 12, 13; Lam. iii. 12, 13). Blow after blow from God's 'hand' (xxxii. 4; xxxix. 10) has lighted upon him. *Stick fast* and *presseth sore* are renderings of different voices of the same verb, meaning literally *to come down, to light upon.*

3. His own sin is the cause of the divine indignation which inflicts the chastisement; and while God's wrath assaults him from without, the fever of sin consumes him from within. With this verse and v. 5. comp. Isaiah's description of the deep-seated disease of Israel's body corporate (Is. i. 5, 6).

anger] Better as R. V. indignation, as in vii. 11; cii. 10.

rest] R. V. health; lit., wholeness or peace. For *in my bones* see vi. 2, note.

4. His sins are like a flood which overwhelms (cxxiv. 4, 5); like a burden which crushes (Gen. iv. 13; Is. liii. 4; Job vii. 20).

5. *My wounds*] Or *stripes* (=*bruises*, Is. i. 6, A. V.): for he has been as it were scourged by God.

my foolishness] Sin is essentially foolishness. Cp. cvii. 17. The

6 I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly;
I go mourning all the day long.
7 For my loins are filled *with* a loathsome *disease:*
And *there is* no soundness in my flesh.
8 I am feeble and sore broken:
I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.
9 Lord, all my desire *is* before thee;
And my groaning is not hid from thee.
10 My heart panteth, my strength faileth me:
As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.
11 My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore;
And my kinsmen stand afar off.

word occurs only once again in the Psalter (lxix. 5), and elsewhere only in Proverbs, where it is common (e.g. v. 23; xix. 3).

6. **I am bent, I am bowed down exceedingly**, as one whose frame is contracted and drawn together by pain, or whose gestures indicate mental anguish. Cp. xxxv. 14; Is. xxi. 3. Notice the vigorous archaism *wried* in A. V. margin, i.e. *twisted*.

mourning] In the guise of a mourner. See note on xxxv. 14.

In later times at any rate it was customary for the accused to appear before the court in mourning. "Whosoever comes before this court of the Sanhedrin to take his trial, presents himself in the guise of humility and fear, appealing to your compassion, with hair neglected, and clad in black garments." (Josephus, *Antiq.* XIV. 9. 3). If the custom prevailed in earlier times, *in mourning garb* may suggest that he feels himself, like Job, under the divine accusation. Cp. Zech. iii. 1 ff.

7. with *a loathsome* disease] R. V. **with burning**; fever and inflammation. Cp. Job xxx. 27, 30.

8. **I am faint and sore bruised** (R. V.). Cp. li. 8; Is. liii. 5, 10.

I have roared &c.] Lit. *I have roared* (xxii. 1; xxxii. 3; Job iii. 24) *from the moaning of my heart*. The inward moaning of his heart must needs find utterance in loud cries of distress.

9—14. The neglect of friends and the scorn of enemies augment his sufferings.

9. God knows what he needs (x. 17; Matt. vi. 8).

10. *panteth*] R. V. excellently, **throbbeth**.

as for the light of mine eyes &c.] His eyes are dim and dull with weakness and weeping. Cp. vi. 7; xiii. 3, note; xxxi. 9; Job xvii. 7; Lam. ii. 11. *Sight* in P. B. V. is a textual error.

11. *from my sore*] R. V. **from my plague**. The word is specially used of the plague of leprosy (Lev. xiii. 3, &c.). His friends treat him as a leper, standing *over against him*, within sight but at a distance. Even his *near kinsmen* falsify their name by standing *afar off*. (LXX. οἱ ἐγγιστά μου μακρόθεν ἔστησαν.)

Comp. xxxi. 11—13; lxix. 8; lxxxviii. 18; Job xix. 13 ff.; Is. liii. 4.

12. Pitiless enemies beset him. Comp. xxxv. 4, 26.

They also that seek after my life lay snares *for me*. 12
And they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things,
And imagine deceits all the day long.
But I, as a deaf *man*, heard not; 13
And *I was* as a dumb *man that* openeth not his mouth.
Thus I was as a man that heareth not, 14
And in whose mouth *are* no reproofs.
For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: 15
Thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.
For I said, *Hear me*, lest *otherwise* they should rejoice 16
over me:
When my foot slippeth, they magnify *themselves* against me.
For I *am* ready to halt, 17
And my sorrow *is* continually before me.

mischievous things] Lit. *destructions.* See note on v. 9.

imagine] Lit. *meditate.* Contrast xxxvii. 26, 30.

13, 14. Conscious of guilt he must keep silence and commit his cause to God, resigned and patient as though he did not hear the insults, or had no power to answer them. Cp. xxxix. 9; Is. liii. 7; 1 Pet. ii. 23.

But I &c.] R. V. But I, as a deaf man, hear not; and I am as a dumb man, &c. He is describing his present situation.

14. Yea, I am become like a man that hath no hearing;
And in whose mouth are no arguments.

No arguments for his own defence. Cp. Job xxiii. 4, where Job desires to argue with God.

15—22. Fresh pleadings with God.

15. The motive of silence and resignation.

in thee...do I hope] Or, *for thee do I wait.* Patience and hope are inseparable. Cp. xxxix. 7; Mic. vii. 7.

thou wilt hear] Thou, thou wilt answer. The pronoun is emphatically expressed. It is possible to complete the sense by supplying *me*, with reference to the prayer of which *v.* 16 speaks: or *for me* (P.B.V.) with reference to *v.* 14. But the one involves the other. An answer to his prayer must be a refutation of the taunts of his enemies.

16. For I said, Lest they rejoice over me (R. V.). This was the plea which he urged in his prayer (xxv. 2; xxxv. 19). The enemies of the godly man rejoice at his calamities, for they see in them a proof of God's disfavour (xli. 11).

when my foot slippeth] Lit. *is moved*, a metaphor for misfortune of any kind (xiii. 4).

magnify themselves] Cp. xxxv. 26.

17. *For* &c.] A further argument for a speedy hearing. For the metaphor cp. xxxv. 15.

my sorrow &c.] I.e. my suffering is unceasingly present with me. Cp. li. 3.

18 For I will declare mine iniquity;
I will be sorry for my sin.
19 But mine enemies *are* lively, *and* they are strong:
And they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied.
20 They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries;
Because I follow *the thing that* good *is*.
21 Forsake me not, O LORD:
O my God, be not far from me.
22 Make haste to help me,
O Lord my salvation.

18. *For* &c.] Sin, he confesses, is the cause of that suffering.

I will be sorry] Or, *I will be troubled*. Jer. *sollicitus ero*: v. l. *contristabor*.

19. *mine enemies* are *lively*] He contrasts their vigour with his own weakness. But the expression is somewhat strange: and a comparison of xxxv. 19 suggests that we should read without cause, corresponding to *wrongfully* in the next line, in place of *are lively*. The Hebrew words are very similar (חיים—חנם).

wrongfully] Lit. *falsely*. Their hatred is based on misconception and misrepresentation.

20. **Yea, and rewarding evil for good**
They are adversaries unto me, for my following of good.

Not, in return for my pursuit of good in general, but, in return for the good I have striven to do for them. The point is their base ingratitude. Cp. xxxv. 12, 13, note.

21, 22. Concluding prayer.

21. Cp. xxii. 1; x. 1.

"The light has not yet dawned upon the darkness of God's wrath. *Fides supplex* is not yet transformed into *fides triumphans*. But the difference between Cain's repentance and David's repentance is shewn in the concluding words. True repentance includes faith: it despairs of itself, but not of God." *Delitzsch*.

22. *Make haste* &c.] Cp. xxii. 19; xl. 13.

O Lord my salvation] Cp. lxii. 2; li. 14.

PSALM XXXIX.

This Psalm, which is pronounced by Ewald to be "indisputably the most beautiful of all the elegies in the Psalter," is a sequel to the preceding one. The situation of the Psalmist is in the main the same. Prolonged sickness has brought him to the very edge of the grave. But the crisis of suffering is over, and the taunts of his enemies have ceased for the time.

The Psalm consists of four stanzas, the first three containing three verses each, and the fourth four verses, which fall into two pairs.

The outline of the contents is as follows:

i. As he compares his lot of suffering with the prosperity of the wicked, the Psalmist is tempted to murmur, and resolves to meet the temptation by silence. But the fire of emotion refuses to be suppressed (1—3).

ii. He is forced to seek relief in prayer that he may be taught to understand the transitoriness of human life and the vanity of worldly aims (4—6).

iii. Thus he is brought to feel that his only hope is in Jehovah, to Whom he turns in silent resignation (7—9).

iv. Then, pleading the frailty and the shortness of human life, he prays for relief and respite (10—13).

In order rightly to understand this Psalm, as well as Ps. xxxviii, it must be remembered (1) that sickness was popularly regarded as a proof of God's displeasure: (2) that to ancient Israel it seemed that death must be an interruption of fellowship with God (Introd. p. xciii ff.).

This Psalm, like Pss. xxxviii and xl, has been regarded by some critics as the utterance of the nation rather than of an individual. But however well it may admit of such an application, this can hardly have been the original meaning.

The Psalm is closely connected in thought and language with Ps. xxxviii. Cp. *vv.* 2, 9 with xxxviii. 13, 14; *v.* 7 with xxxviii. 15; *v.* 8 with xxxviii. 16: *vv.* 10, 11 with xxxviii. 1—3, 11. It is also related to Ps. lxii. Both Psalms are marked by the same hope in God, and the same view of the vanity of life: and in both the word *ak*, 'only' or 'surely,' is characteristic. The parallels with the Book of Job should also be noticed. See note on *v.* 13.

The title should be rendered, *For the Chief Musician Jeduthun.* Jeduthun, whose name appears again in the titles of Pss. lxii and lxxvii, is mentioned in 1 Chr. xvi. 41 f.; xxv. 1 ff.; 2 Chr. v. 12; xxxv. 15, along with Heman and Asaph, as one of the directors of the Temple music. He appears to have been also called Ethan (1 Chr. xv. 17 ff.).

To the chief Musician, *even* to Jeduthun, A Psalm of David.

I said, I will take heed to my ways, 39
That *I* sin not with my tongue:

1—3. The resolution of silence in the presence of temptation.

1. *I said*] To myself: I resolved, as the result of self-communing. Cp. xxx. 6; xxxi. 14.

I will take heed to my ways] Lit. *I will keep my ways:* keep watch and ward over thought word and action. Cp. Prov. xvi. 17; and the often repeated exhortation in Deuteronomy to 'take heed' (iv. 9; &c.). He fears that he may sin with his tongue (Job xxxi. 30) by murmuring against God as he contrasts the prosperity of the wicked with his own lot of trial. Cp. Job i. 22; ii. 10; and generally Pss. xxxvii and lxxiii.

I will keep my mouth with a bridle,
While the wicked *is* before me.
2 I was dumb *with* silence, I held my peace, *even* from good;
And my sorrow was stirred.
3 My heart was hot within me,
While I was musing the fire burned:
Then spake I with my tongue,

4 LORD, make me to know mine end,
And the measure of my days, what it *is;*
That I may know how frail I *am.*
5 Behold, thou hast made my days *as* a handbreadth:

I will keep &c.] Lit. *I will keep a muzzle for my mouth.* Cp. cxli. 3. Perhaps with the LXX, we should read *I will put...on.*

while the wicked is *before me*] For the sight of their prosperity is a temptation. Cp. Hab. i. 3. This seems to be the sense, rather than that he was afraid of giving way to complaints in the hearing of the wicked, which might give occasion for ridicule or blasphemy.

2. *silence*] The word carries with it the idea of mute submission. Cp. lxii. 1; xxxvii. 7; Lam. iii. 26.

even *from good*] I kept absolute silence, speaking neither good nor bad (Gen. xxxi. 24). Less probably as R. V. marg., *and had no comfort.*

my sorrow was stirred] The effort to suppress his feelings only aggravated the pain. Cp. xxxii. 3. So Ovid, *Trist.* v. 1. 63, 'Strangulat inclusus dolor atque exaestuat intus.'

3. *burned*] Better, as R.V. from Coverdale and P.B.V., *kindled.* The smouldering fire of passion within could no longer be restrained from bursting into a flame of words. Comp. (though the cause was different) Jer. xx. 9.

4—6. Silence has proved impossible. He must give vent to his emotions, and he breaks out into a prayer that he may be taught so to understand the frailty of his life and the vanity of human aims, that he may be led back from selfish, envious, murmuring thoughts, to rest in submission to God's will. Cp. xc. 12.

4. His prayer is not that he may know how much of life is left him; as the P.B.V. *that I may be certified how long I have to live*, paraphrasing the LXX. ἵνα γνῶ τί ὑστερῶ ἐγώ: *ut sciam quid desit mihi*, Vulg.: but that he may realise how surely life must end, and how brief it must be at best. *What it is*=how short it is.

that *I may know*] Better, as R.V., let me know. *Frail*, lit. *ceasing*, transitory.

5. as *a handbreadth*] Better, *a few handbreadths long.* The shortest measure is enough to reckon life by. The 'handbreadth'=four 'fingers' (Jer. lii. 21 compared with 1 Kings vii. 26) or less than half a 'span.'

And mine age *is* as nothing before thee:
Verily every man at his best state *is* altogether vanity. Selah.

Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: 6
Surely they are disquieted in vain:
He heapeth up *riches*, and knoweth not who shall gather them.
And now, Lord, what wait I for? 7
My hope *is* in thee.
Deliver me from all my transgressions: 8

mine age &c.] The same word as that rendered 'world' in xvii. 14, denoting life in its fleeting, transient aspect. In the sight of the Eternal man's existence shrinks into nothing. Cp. Is. xl. 17.

verily] &c.] The particle *ak*, which is characteristic of this Ps. and of Ps. lxii. may be used affirmatively to introduce the whole clause (*verily*, or *surely*, as in *vv.* 6, 11), or restrictively, to emphasise the words which immediately follow it (*only*). The order of the words points to the latter sense here. 'Only altogether a breath', i.e. *nought but mere vanity are all men at their best estate:* lit. *when standing firm:* however securely they may seem to be established. Cp. cxliv. 4; James iv. 14.

6. Only as a phantom doth each walk to and fro:
Only for vanity do they turmoil:
One heapeth up, and he will not know who doth gather the hoard.

Man is an unsubstantial phantom (or *shadow*, lit. *image*), lxxiii. 20: σκιᾶς ὄναρ, 'a dream of shadow' as Pindar calls him (Pyth. VIII. 95). With unreal aim and unenduring result do men disturb themselves. The word expresses the idea of restless noisy bustle and uproar. Cp. 'a *tumultuous* city' Is. xxii. 2, and see note on 'abundance', xxxvii. 16. *Shew* (A. V.) must be taken to mean 'appearance,' not 'display' or 'pomp.'

One heapeth up riches, treasures, possessions of all kinds (Job xxvii. 16). *and he will not know* after his death *who gathers* these hoards as his harvest, or rather, *who carries them off* as his spoil (Is. xxxiii. 4). Cp. Luke xii. 20.

7—9. Man's life being thus transient, and earthly treasures thus deceitful, the Psalmist turns to God, as the one sure stay in life.

7. *And now*] Or, *Now therefore* (ii. 10), introduces a conclusion from a preceding statement.

what wait I for] What have I waited and still am waiting for? or, What (else) could I have waited for? the form of the question implying that nothing else was possible.

wait...hope] The words form a link between the preceding (*v.* 15) and the following (*v.* 1) Psalms.

8. The Psalmist prays to be delivered not merely from his present afflictions but from the power of the sins which he recognises as the

Make me not the reproach of the foolish.
9 I was dumb, I opened not my mouth;
Because thou didst *it*.
10 Remove thy stroke away from me:
I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.
11 When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity,
Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth:
Surely every man *is* vanity. Selah.

12 Hear my prayer, O LORD,
And give ear unto my cry;
Hold not thy peace at my tears:

cause of them. Sin gets hold of its victim and brings him into punishment. Cp. xl. 12; Job viii. 4.

the reproach of the foolish] The fool (xiv. 1 note) regards the sufferings of the godly as a mark of God's wrath, and taunts him accordingly (xxxviii. 16; xxii. 8; xxxi. 11). Cp. the plea of the nation, xliv. 13 ff.; lxxiv. 18, 22.

9. This verse may refer to the silence with which he bore the taunts of his enemies (*v.* 2; xxxviii. 13, 14): or it may be the expression of perfect resignation to the will of God: I am dumb, I will not open my mouth, for THOU hast done it. Cp. Lam. i. 21. "He has risen out of the moody silence of impatience to the contrite silence of evangelical faith, recognising at once his sin and God's holy love." *Kay.*

10—13. Petition for relief (10, 11) and respite (12, 13).

10. *stroke*] The same word as that rendered *plague* in xxxviii. 11. Cp. Job ix. 34.

I am consumed &c.] By the conflict of thy hand am I consumed. 'I' stands in emphatic contrast with 'thy hand'. When the power of the Almighty contends with me, I, frail mortal that I am, must needs perish. Cp. Job x. 2 ff.

11. When thou with rebukes dost chasten a man for iniquity,
Thou wastest like a moth his desirableness:
Nought but vanity are all men.

The A. V. obscures the correspondence of the first line with xxxviii. 1; vi. 1. As easily as the moth-grub, working unseen, destroys 'goodly raiment' (Gen. xxvii. 15), so easily does God's chastisement destroy a man's 'goodliness,' the bodily strength and beauty which make him attractive (Is. liii. 2). It is God's consuming 'hand' which is compared to the 'moth' (Hos. v. 12); not, as the A. V. might seem to imply, the ephemeral duration of man's goodliness. Cp. Job xiii. 28; Is. l. 9; li. 8.

12. *hold not thy peace*] Restoration to health will be an answer. But the word may be rendered, as in R. V. of xxviii. 1, *be not deaf*. So Jerome, *ne obsurdescas*.

It is a Rabbinic saying that there are three kinds of supplication,

For I *am* a stranger with thee,
And a sojourner, as all my fathers *were*.
O spare me, that I may recover strength, 13
Before I go hence, and be no more.

each superior to the other; prayer, crying, and tears. Prayer is made in silence, crying with a loud voice, but tears surpass all. "There is no door, through which tears do not pass," and, "The gates of tears are never locked." Cp. Heb. v. 7.

a stranger with thee, and a sojourner] Omit *and*. 'Stranger' and 'sojourner' were the technical terms for aliens residing in a country to which they did not belong, and where they had no natural rights of citizenship (Gen. xxiii. 4). The words suggest the idea of a temporary residence, dependent on the good-will of the actual owners. The Israelites were taught to regard themselves as 'strangers and sojourners' in the land of Canaan, which belonged to Jehovah (Lev. xxv. 23): and here the idea is extended to man in general. The earth is God's, and man is His tenant upon it (cxix. 19). This being so, the Psalmist appeals for a hearing on the ground that he is but a temporary resident on the earth (Gen. xlvii. 9), God's guest for a while only in the upper world, where alone His Presence can be enjoyed. And further, as the strangers and sojourners among them were specially commended to the care of Israel (Ex. xxii. 21: &c.), he would plead to be treated by God with a corresponding clemency.

The words are placed in David's mouth by the Chronicler (1 Chr. xxix. 15), and applied by St Peter (1 Pet. ii. 11) to the Christian's position in the world, παρακαλῶ ὡς παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους, the words used in the LXX here. Cp. Heb. xi. 13.

as all my fathers] Cp. Elijah's words, 1 Kings xix. 4.

13. *O spare me*] So Jerome, *parce mihi*. But more exactly, Look away from me. Cheyne renders, 'avert thy frown.'

that I may recover strength] Lit. *brighten up*, as the sky when the clouds clear.

Parallels for every phrase in the verse are to be found in Job. See Job vii. 19; xiv. 6; x. 20, 21; vii. 8 (R. V.).

It is, as Delitzsch remarks, the heroic character of Old Testament faith, that in the midst of the enigmas of life, and in full view of the deep gloom enshrouding the future, it throws itself unconditionally into the arms of God.

PSALM XL.

This Psalm consists of two parts, differing widely in tone and character. In the first part (*vv.* 1–11) thanksgiving for deliverance and its true expression in the devotion of obedience to God's will are the prominent ideas: in the second part (*vv.* 12—17) the Psalmist is still the victim of a cruel persecution, from which he prays for deliverance.

The first part is marked by singular vigour and spirituality; the second part consists mainly of phrases found elsewhere, and *vv.* 13—17 recur separately in Book ii as Ps. lxx.

It seems most probable that two Psalms or parts of Psalms have been combined by a compiler, with reference to his own needs or for liturgical purposes, at a time when he himself or the nation looked back upon past deliverance from the midst of present trials. Still it is possible that the author of *vv.* 1—11 himself added *vv.* 12—17 at a later time under changed circumstances, making use of language which he had employed before in time of distress. There are links of connexion between the two parts. *Be pleased* (*v.* 13) takes up *thy good pleasure* (*v.* 8); *taketh thought for me* (*v.* 17) glances back to *thy thoughts to us-ward* (*v.* 5), *they are more* (*v.* 12) is found in *v.* 5: and such repetition of a word already used in a different connexion is characteristic of the author of the first part: e.g. *restrain not thou* (*v.* 11) corresponds to *I will not restrain* (*v.* 9); *thy lovingkindness and thy truth* (*v.* 11) to the same words in *v.* 10.

If the Psalm is David's, it would seem to belong to the later years of his outlaw life, shortly before he became king, rather than to the time of Absalom's rebellion. It has been well pointed out that the words of *vv.* 6 ff. gain fresh force if they are taken in connexion with 1 Sam. xv. 22. The self-devotion of the king after God's own heart is the exact opposite of the self-will which was the ground of Saul's rejection.

The ascription of the Psalm to Jeremiah rests mainly on the supposed reference of *v.* 2 to Jeremiah's imprisonment (Jer. xxxviii. 6), but the language is certainly figurative and not literal.

Some regard the speaker in this, as in the two preceding Psalms, as "either pious Israel personified, or (virtually the same thing) a representative pious Israelite" (Cheyne), who speaks in the name of the nation. But though Israel in later times may well have appropriated to itself the words of the Psalm, the personal origin of it appears to be unmistakable. There is not the slightest hint that the enemies referred to are heathen, or that those who are won by the sight of God's mercy (*v.* 3) are distant nations.

The first part falls into four approximately equal stanzas. The following is an outline of the contents.

A. i. After long and patient waiting prayer has been answered and occasion given for fresh thanksgiving (1—3).

ii. Once more it has been proved that trust in God is the only source of true happiness. The goodness of God to His people is infinite and incomparable (4, 5).

iii. What shall be man's response to that love? Not material sacrifice, but the service of glad obedience (6—8).

iv. The Psalmist has not failed publicly to confess what God has proved Himself to be, and confidently anticipates the continuance of His favour (9—11).

B. Suddenly the scene changes. The Psalmist represents himself as overwhelmed by afflictions, and pleads for speedy help, and the discomfiture of his malicious enemies. Yet even in the midst of distress his trust remains unshaken (12—17).

This Psalm is one of the Proper Psalms for Good Friday. Its appropriateness is obvious, as describing in *vv.* 6 ff. the fundamental nature of the sacrifice which was consummated upon the Cross.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

I waited patiently for the LORD; 40
And he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.
He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry 2
clay,
And set my feet upon a rock, *and* established my goings.
And he hath put a new song in my mouth, *even* praise unto 3
our God:
Many shall see *it*, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.
Blessed *is that* man that maketh the LORD his trust, 4
And respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.

1—3. The reward of patient waiting upon God.

1. *I waited patiently*] Such renderings as *I waited, yea I waited*, or, *I waited waitingly* (Vulg. *expectans expectavi*) are closer to the original. Cp. xxxviii. 15; xxxix. 7: and the confession of the Church in the day of Redemption, Is. xxv. 9.

he inclined unto me] As it were, 'bent down towards me.' To 'incline' or 'bow down *the ear*' is the usual phrase (xxxi. 2; cxvi. 2).

my cry] Cp. xxxix. 12; xviii. 6.

2. **And brought me up out of a pit of destruction, out of the miry slough:**
And set my feet upon a rock, made firm my steps

A literal reference to Jeremiah's imprisonment in the dungeon can hardly be intended. The second line, *set...rock*, makes it plain that the whole verse is to be understood figuratively. He compares his plight to that of a prisoner in a dungeon (Lam. iii. 53, 55), or even a dead man in the grave (xxviii. 1; lxxxviii. 4, 6); to that of a traveller floundering in a morass, or quicksand. Quagmires, 'treacherous to the last degree,' are common in Palestine. Thomson's *Land and the Book*, p. 360. Now he has been given firm footing (xxvii. 5), and the possibility of secure advance (xvii. 5; xxxvii. 31).

3. Such deliverance is a fresh theme of praise. Cp. xxxiii. 3. The plural pronoun, '*our God*,' implies that others were interested in the Psalmist and his fortunes.

many shall see it] Omit *it*, which only weakens the expression. The contemplation of God's mercy in the deliverance of His servant, and God's power in the discomfiture of his enemies which that deliverance implies, will inspire a reverent awe, and lead to trust. Cp. lii. 6; and generally, xxii. 22 ff.

4, 5. The blessedness of such a trust.

4. **Happy is the man that hath made Jehovah his trust,**
And hath not turned unto the arrogant, and false apostates.

The word for *man* is that used in xxxiv. 8, where see note. For the opposite to 'making Jehovah the object of trust' see Ps. lii. 7.

respecteth not] Rather, as above, hath not turned unto: *non est*

5 Many, O LORD my God, *are* thy wonderful works *which*
thou hast done,
And thy thoughts *which are* to us-ward:
They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee:
If I would declare and speak *of them*,
They are moe than can be numbered.

aversus ad...Jerome. The word is specially used of turning away from God to idols or false objects of confidence (Deut. xxix. 18; Hos. iii. 1; Ezek. xxix. 16).

the proud &c.] The word for 'proud' suggests the idea of overbearing arrogance and ostentatious self-assertion: 'such as turn aside to lies', or as R. V. marg., *fall away treacherously*, are those who desert God and the right cause for false objects of reliance and false aims. Idolatry does not appear to be meant, at any rate exclusively. Happy the man who is not misled by appearances to despise God's help, and seek the patronage of worldly men who boast of their own power.

5. **Abundantly hast Thou wrought, even Thou, O Jehovah my God,**
Thy marvellous works and Thy thoughts to us-ward:
There is none to be compared unto Thee.

Multa fecisti tu Domine Deus meus mirabilia tua et cogitationes tuas pro nobis. Jerome. *Thou* is emphatic. Jehovah is contrasted with all such objects of reliance as those mentioned in the preceding verse. His 'marvellous works' (ix. 1 note) are the embodiment of His 'thoughts' or purposes of love toward His people. Cp. xcii. 5; Is. lv. 8, 9; Jer. xxix. 11. The rendering of R. V. marg., *there is none to be compared unto thee*, an exclamation of reverent wonder (cp. lxxxix. 6; lxxi. 19), is decidedly preferable to that of the A. V., and that of R. V. text, *they cannot be set in order unto thee*. The P.B.V. *and yet there is no man that ordereth them unto thee* (cp. Is. xl. 14) is improbable.

they are moe than can be numbered] Or. *than I can tell of* (xxvi. 7). *Moe* as the comparative of *many* is an archaism which has disappeared from modern editions of the Bible. The word for *they are more* may mean *they are mightier*. Their number and their greatness alike baffle human powers to celebrate. Cp. John xxi. 25.

6—8. True service consists not in material sacrifices but in obedience to the will of God. The stanza is an answer to the implied question, How should man express his gratitude? It affirms the common prophetic doctrine that sacrifice was in itself of no value apart from the dispositions of heart which it was intended to represent. The new commandment of the Exodus was not sacrifice but obedience (Ex. xv. 26). See Ps. l. 7 ff.; li. 16 ff.; 1 Sam. xv. 22; Hos. vi. 6; Micah vi. 8; Jer. vii. 21 ff.

6. The various kinds of offerings are described according to their material, as *sacrifice* of slain animals, and *offering* ('meal-offering') of the fruits of the earth (Lev. ii. 1 ff.); and according to their purpose, as *burnt-offering*, symbolising the dedication of the worshipper to God,

Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; 6
Mine ears hast thou opened:
Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.
Then said I, Lo, I come: 7
In the volume of the book *it is* written of me,
I delight to do thy will, O my God: 8

and *sin-offering*, for the reconciliation of the offender and the restoration of interrupted communion.

thou didst not desire] R. V. **thou hast no delight in.** It is the same word as in *v.* 8, and in the parallel passages Hos. vi. 6; Is. i. 11; cp. 1 Sam. xv. 22.

mine ears hast thou opened] Lit. *ears hast thou dug* (or, *pierced*) *for me.* This unique phrase can hardly be an equivalent for the common expression to 'uncover' or 'open the ear,' to be explained as a parenthetical exclamation that this truth has been impressed upon the Psalmist by a special revelation. It is best to regard it as a statement preparing the way for *v.* 7, and placed between the two parallel clauses of *v.* 6 for poetic effect. God has endowed man with the faculty of hearing, and the endowment implies a corresponding duty of obedience. 'Ears' need not be limited to the physical organ, but may include 'the ears of the heart.' The same Hebr. word means *to hear* and *to obey*. Cp. the repeated appeals to Israel to hear; Deut. iv. 1; vi. 4; &c.

The language does not suggest any reference to the custom of boring the slave's ear (Ex. xxi. 6; Deut. xv. 17) in the sense, 'Thou hast bound me to Thyself for perpetual service.'

hast thou not required] Lit. *asked.* Cp. Deut. x. 12; Mic. vi. 8.

7. *Then said I*] This was his answer when he became aware of God's requirements.

Lo, I come] Rather as R. V., **Lo, I am come:** (LXX. ἰδοὺ ἥκω) the servant's response to his master's summons (Num. xxii. 38; 2 Sam. xix. 20): like 'Behold me,' or, 'Here I am' (Is. vi. 9). The object of the coming is not expressed, but is clear from the context.

in the volume of the book it is *written of me*] Better, **in a roll of a book is it prescribed to me:** though the rendering of A. V., which is that of the LXX, is possible. The exact phrase 'roll of a book' occurs only in Jer. xxxvi. 2, 4; Ezek. ii. 9; 'roll' only in Jer. xxxvi; Ezek. iii. 1—3; Zech. v. 1, 2; Ezra vi. 2[1]. Cp. however Is. xxxiv. 4. The context points to Deuteronomy, or at any rate the nucleus of the teaching contained in it, as the book referred to. The absence of the article seems to emphasise the fact that a *written* document is referred to (*in a book*, cp. Hos. viii. 12), rather than to single out a particular document as '*the* book' *par excellence*, as the A. V. seems to imply.

8. *I delight*] Cp. *v.* 6. What is God's delight is his delight. Contrast the delight of the wicked in evil, *v.* 14.

[1] 'Roll' in Is. viii. 1 (A.V.) should be *tablet*.

Yea, thy law *is* within my heart.
9 I have preached righteousness in the great congregation:

thy will] Thy good pleasure: what Thou approves: (Prov. xv. 8; Ps. xix. 14).

thy law is *within my heart*] Lit. *in the midst of my body*, as though God's law were itself the heart which gives life to his whole being (xxii. 14). Such was God's demand of Israel (Deut. vi. 6); such is the characteristic of the righteous (Ps. xxxvii. 31; Is. li. 7): such is to be the universal condition in the Messianic age (Jer. xxxi. 33). The law will be graven not on tablets of stone (Ex. xxxii. 15 f.), but on the tablet of the heart (Prov. iii. 3; vii. 3).

Vv. 6—8 *a* are quoted in Heb. x. 5—7 according to the LXX[1], with some slight variations. The writer is contrasting Christ's perfect obedience with the inefficacy of the sacrifices of the Law, and he puts these words into His mouth as the most fitting expression of the purpose of His life. The willing obedience which the Psalmist of old was taught to recognise as the divine requirement for himself and Israel was carried to its completion, was 'fulfilled,' in Christ. The variation of the LXX from the Hebrew may seem to present a serious difficulty. But the appropriateness of the quotation does not depend on this particular clause, and the rendering of the LXX, whatever its origin, has in effect a sense analogous to the sense of the original. As the ear is the instrument for receiving the divine command, so the body is the instrument for fulfilling it. The possession of a body implies the duty of service, in the same way that the possession of hearing implies the duty of obedience. See Bp. Westcott's note.

9—11. Beside the sacrifice of himself, he has not failed to render the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, by the fullest public proclamation of Jehovah's goodness, which he trusts he will still continue to experience.

9. *I have preached righteousness*] R. V. I have published: better, as R. V. marg., I have proclaimed glad tidings of, *εὐηγγελισάμην δικαιοσύνην* (LXX). His theme was 'righteousness;' all the facts which are the concrete manifestation and evidence of God's righteousness (*v.* 10). The good news which he can proclaim is the certainty of the just moral government of the world, and Jehovah's faithfulness to His people. And this he has done *in the great congregation*, with the utmost publicity (xxii. 25; xxxv. 18), perhaps, as the prophets often delivered their messages, on some festival (Jer. xxvi. 2).

[1] The reading of the LXX is *σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι, a body didst thou prepare for me*. This reading is attested by the Vulgate. *Aures* in the Gallican Psalter is a correction. *καταρτίζεσθαι* occurs in the LXX as the rendering of several Hebrew words, and might easily have been chosen to represent the obscure *thou hast dug*. 'Body' for 'ears' may then have been a free paraphrase. But the reading may have originated in an ancient corruption of the Greek text. Through a repetition of the final C of the preceding word and the change of ΩΤΙΑ into ΩΜΑ, ΗΘΕΛΗCΑCΩΤΙΑ might easily have become ΗΘΕΛΗCΑCCΩΜΑ.

Lo, I have not refrained my lips,
O LORD, thou knowest.
I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; 10
I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation:
I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from
the great congregation.
Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: 11
Let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.
For innumerable evils have compassed me about: 12
Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am
not able to look *up*;

I have not refrained] R. V. restores Coverdale's I will not refrain: but the words refer rather to what he did in the past than to what he resolves to do in the future. By rendering I did not restrain, the connexion with *v.* 11 may be brought out.

thou knowest] For the appeal to God's omniscience, cp. lxix. 5; Jer. xv. 15.

10. Neither indolence nor ingratitude nor fear of man has deterred him from openly celebrating those fundamental attributes of the divine character which have been once more manifested in his deliverance. For *thy righteousness*, see v. 8, note; for *lovingkindness*, *faithfulness*, *righteousness*, cp. xxxvi. 5, 6, 7, 10; for *truth* and *salvation*, xxv. 5; *lovingkindness* and *truth*, xxv. 10.

11. THOU. O Jehovah, wilt not restrain Thy tender mercies from
me,
Thy lovingkindness and thy truth shall continually guard me.

The words are not a prayer but an expression of confidence in the certainty of God's response (Matt. x. 32). THOU is emphatic. God on His part will not fail. The double correspondence with *vv.* 9, 10 should be noted. As he has not *restrained* his lips, so, he trusts, God will not *restrain* His tender mercies: as he has not ceased to acknowledge God's lovingkindness and truth, so that lovingkindness and truth will not cease to protect him. Cp. xxv. 21; lxi. 7; Is. lxiii. 15.

12—17. The scene is changed. The sky is overclouded. Supplication for speedy help in time of danger takes the place of joyous thanksgiving.

12. This verse is somewhat loosely attached to *v.* 11 by *for*. The rendering of *v.* 11 as a prayer makes the connexion appear closer and more natural than it is.

evils] Afflictions (xxxiv. 19), which are trials of faith or chastisements for sin.

have compassed me about] The use of the word in 2 Sam. xxii. 5 suggests that the true meaning is 'have overwhelmed me like a flood.' Cp. Jonah ii. 5.

have taken hold upon me] R. V. have overtaken me. Sin pursues

They are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me.

13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me:
O LORD, make haste to help me.

14 Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it;
Let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil.

15 Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame
That say unto me, Aha, aha!

16 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee:

the sinner like an avenging Nemesis, till it gets him into its power and punishes him. Cp. xxxviii. 4; Deut. xxviii. 15; Job viii. 4 (R. V.); Prov. v. 22.

so that I am not able to look up] The only rendering justified by usage is, **and I cannot see.** In the extremity of terror and faintness sight fails him. Cp. xxxviii. 10; lxix. 3, and note that the next line contains parallels to both passages.

than the hairs of my head] As in lxix. 4. (A different word is used there for *they are more:* here it is the same as in *v.* 5.)

therefore &c.] Lit. and my heart hath forsaken me. Courage utterly fails. Cp. xxxviii. 10.

13. *Vv.* 13—17 recur as Ps. lxx, with some verbal variations.

Be pleased] An echo of 'thy good pleasure' ('thy will') in *v.* 8. The word is omitted in Ps. lxx, and in the first line, though not in the second, *God* is substituted for *LORD*, according to the usual rule in Book II. See Introd., p. lv f.

make haste to help me] Cp. xxxviii. 22; xxii. 19.

14. The whole verse is a repetition, with variations, of xxxv. 4, 26 (cp. xxxviii. 12); and *vv.* 15—17 recall *vv.* 21, 25, 27, 10 of the same Psalm. *Together* and *to destroy it* are omitted in lxx. 2.

let them be driven backward &c.] Render, as in Ps. xxxv;

Let them be turned back and brought to dishonour
That delight in my hurt.

Contrast xxxv. 27 with the last line.

15. R. V., **Let them be desolate** (Lam. i. 16) **by reason of their shame,** the defeat of their malicious plans: or, less probably, *let them be astonished* (Lev. xxvi. 32) *for a reward of their shame,* at the shame which is their recompence. Ps. lxx. 4 reads *let them turn back*, as in vi. 10. The difference of reading probably arose out of the confusion of sound or form between M and B (ישבו–ישטו).

Aha, aha] The exclamation of malicious pleasure at another's misfortune. Cp. xxxv. 21, 25.

16. Cp. xxxv. 27. The discomfiture of the wicked gives occasion for the righteous to rejoice in God, not merely because they are set free

Let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD
be magnified.
But I *am* poor and needy; *yet* the Lord thinketh upon me: 17
Thou *art* my help and my deliverer;
Make no tarrying, O my God.

from persecution, but because they see in it the proof of God's righteous sovereignty and the unfolding of His purposes of salvation.

such as love thy salvation] Cp. *v.* 10: and the corresponding N. T. thought in 2 Tim. iv. 8.

17. The Psalmist reverts to his own need, but in calm assurance that he is not forgotten.

But I, who am afflicted and needy:—

The Lord will take thought for me.

For *afflicted and needy*, see ix. 18; xxxv. 10; xxxvii. 14; lxxxvi. 1; cix. 22. With *will take thought for me*, cp. *v.* 5 (*thoughts*): Jonah i. 6. Ps. lxx. 5 reads *O God, make haste unto me*, probably an alteration suggested by the parallelism. *make no tarrying*. *My help*, as in xxvii. 9: *my deliverer*, as in xviii. 2. 48 (a different word from *deliver* in *v.* 13).

make no tarrying] Cp. Daniel's prayer, ix. 19 (A. V. *defer not*); and the promise, Is. xlvi. 13.

PSALM XLI.

The Psalmist is suffering from an illness which threatens to be fatal. Treacherous enemies, and among them one who had been a trusted friend, eagerly anticipate his death. But his confidence in Jehovah remains unshaken.

It is much disputed whether the Psalmist is to be thought of as still lying on his sick-bed, or as restored to health and recording his past experience. In the latter case 'I said' in *v.* 4 must be supposed to govern *vv.* 4—12, or at least *vv.* 4—10. But the former alternative appears preferable, for it is unnatural to regard the prayer of *v.* 10 as part of a narrative, and the verb in *v.* 4 can be rendered 'I have said', or 'I say'.

The Psalm consists of four stanzas, of which the second and third cohere closely.

i. The first stanza is an expansion of the beatitude, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' The language is general, but the Psalmist is thinking of himself. Conscious, like Job (xxx. 25), of having shewn compassion towards others, he trusts that he may receive the blessings promised to the compassionate. And further, the picture of the spirit which wins divine approval emphasises the wickedness of the treatment which he is himself experiencing (1—3).

ii. iii. A prayer for restoration introduces the description of his present situation. The malice and hypocrisy of his enemies are vividly delineated. The climax of all is the perfidy of a trusted friend (4—9).

iv. From his enemies he turns to God with renewed prayer for

restoration, and expression of confidence in the continuance of His favour (10—12).

If David was the author of the Psalm, the false friend can hardly be other than Ahithophel, and the Psalm must have been written shortly before the outbreak of Absalom's rebellion. Absalom's sneer at Hushai (2 Sam. xvi. 17) well illustrates the confidential relation of a trusted counsellor to the king, and the depth of his own perfidy.

It is true that the narrative in 2 Sam. makes no reference to an illness such as is here described; but that narrative necessarily passes over many details. Such an illness would account for the remissness in attending to his official duties, which Absalom's words to the suitor for justice seem to imply (2 Sam. xv. 3). It would account also for the strange failure of David's natural courage which his flight from Jerusalem at the first outbreak of the rebellion appears to indicate.

Unnerved by sickness, in which he recognised a just punishment for his sins, David watched the growing disloyalty of his courtiers, and in particular of Ahithophel, without feeling able to strike and crush the conspiracy before it came to a head. Comp. generally, Ps. lv.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

41 Blessed *is* he that considereth the poor:
The LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.
2 The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive;
And he shall be blessed upon the earth:
And thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.

1—3. The blessings in store for the compassionate man.

1. *Blessed*] Or, *happy*, as in *v.* 2, and in i. 1. The word is to be distinguished from *blessed* in the doxology of ch. 13, the tribute of human reverence to divine majesty. The last Psalm in Book I begins like the first with a beatitude.

that considereth the poor] Behaves considerately and intelligently towards those in affliction, shewing kindness and sympathy, and not judging them harshly. Cp. for illustration xxxv. 13, 14; James i. 27. The word rendered *poor* is different from that in xl. 17. It means *weak*, and includes the sick as well as the poor. The sequel shews that it is the sick that the Psalmist has chiefly in mind. The P.B.V. *the poor and needy* follows the LXX, which may have been influenced by xl. 17.

in time of trouble] R.V. in the day of evil, though *in the day of trouble* is given in xxvii. 5 for the same phrase.

2, 3. It is possible to render as in P.B.V. and R.V. marg., *The* LORD *preserve him...the* LORD *support him:* but it is more natural to regard these clauses as descriptive of the blessings which await the compassionate man, rather than as a prayer on his behalf.

he shall be blessed upon the earth] He shall be made prosperous, or more probably, counted happy (Job xxix. 11; Ps. lxxii. 17), in the land. Cp. xxxvii. 3 ff.

and thou wilt not deliver him] Rather, as R.V., and deliver not

The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: 3
Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.
I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: 4
Heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.
Mine enemies speak evil of me, 5
When shall he die, and his name perish?
And if he come to see *me*, he speaketh vanity: 6

thou him. Cp. xxvii. 12. The language of promise passes into that of prayer, doubtless with a tacit reference to the Psalmist's own need.

3. **The LORD will support him upon the couch of languishing** (R. V.), uphold him (xviii. 35) and preserve him from sinking into the grave.

thou wilt make all his bed] Lit. thou hast turned (or, changed) his lying down: changed his sickness into health. Cp. xxx. 11. Instead of a general truth a particular example is appealed to: or perhaps faith pictures the result as already attained. 'The LORD will support...nay, thou hast already raised him up.'

The verse is commonly explained as a metaphor from the nurse supporting the patient's head and shifting the bed and pillows to give ease and relief, but usage does not seem to warrant this interpretation.

4—6. The foregoing sketch of the blessedness of the compassionate man serves to introduce the Psalmist's description of his own case, partly as a foil and contrast to the heartless treatment he is experiencing, partly because he feels that he can himself plead for a share in the mercy promised to the merciful.

4. *I said*] Or, I, even I, have said. This has been and is my prayer. *v.* 10 seems to imply that the sickness is not yet a thing of the past.

be merciful] **Be gracious** (iv. 1; &c.).

heal my soul] The soul is the man's whole 'self;' the living personality which results from the union of spirit and flesh. See Oehler's *Old Test. Theology*, § 70. The bodily sickness is the sign and symptom of spiritual disease: he would fain be healed of both. Cp. vi. 2, 3; Jer. xvii. 14.

for I have sinned against thee] Cp. li. 4; xxxi. 10. He has offended against God; the chastisement comes from Him; and He alone can heal. Cp. Hos. vi. 1.

5. *speak evil of me*] R. V. against me. *v.* 5 takes up *v.* 2, as *v.* 4 answers to *v.* 3.

When &c.] The words of the enemies, expressing their impatient eagerness for his death, and even for the extinction of his posterity. Cp. cix. 13; 2 Sam. xviii. 18; Ps. ix. 6.

6. **And if one** *of them* **comes to see** *me*, **he speaketh falsehood.** If one of these enemies comes to visit him, as was usual in sickness (2 Kings viii. 29), he speaks vanity or falsehood (xii. 2), makes hypocritical professions of sympathy; though all the time *his heart is gathering*

His heart gathereth iniquity to itself;
When he goeth abroad, he telleth *it*.
7 All that hate me whisper together against me:
Against me do they devise my hurt.
8 An evil disease, *say they*, cleaveth fast unto him:
And *now* that he lieth he shall rise up no more.
9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted,
Which did eat *of* my bread,
Hath lift up *his* heel against me.

iniquity or *mischief*; he is collecting materials for fresh slander, or feeding his malice on the sight of the sick man; and then *he goeth abroad*, *he telleth* what he has seen.

7. The scene outside the house is graphically depicted. We see the associates waiting, eager for news. With a transparent pretence of secrecy they whisper together, and divert themselves with anticipating the worst.

do they devise my hurt] Or, *imagine evil for me*, indulging in uncharitable speculations as to the cause of his illness (cp. Job xxii. 5 ff.), and hoping for a fatal issue of it. The next verse is a summary of their malevolent conversation.

8. Render: A deadly mischief is poured out upon him.

The phrase *a thing of belial* is variously explained to mean *an incurable disease* or *a matter of wickedness* (cp. note on xviii. 4). The use of it in ci. 3 (*base thing*), and Deut. xv. 9 (*vile thought*) points to the latter as the primary sense. But probably the speakers do not distinguish between the moral cause—some monstrous crime—and the physical effect—a fatal illness—; but include the latter in the former. Cp. Shimei's taunt, 2 Sam. xvi. 7.

cleaveth fast unto him] R. V. marg., *is poured out upon him*: perhaps, *is molten*, or, *welded fast upon him*. He will never be free from his guilt and its punishment.

The rendering in P.B.V., *Let the sentence of guiltiness proceed against him*, is quite impossible.

now *that he lieth* &c.] Now that he has taken to his bed he will never leave it again.

9. *mine own familiar friend*] Lit. *the man of my peace*. Cp. vii. 4. Jer. xx. 10; xxxviii. 22; Obad. 7; and the similar complaints of ingratitude in xxxv. 12 ff., lv. 12 ff. (where the Heb. for *familiar friend* is quite different).

which did eat of *my bread*] Bound to me by the tie of hospitality; and, if the speaker is David, by the honour of entertainment at the royal table. Cp. 2 Sam. ix. 10 ff.; 1 Kings xviii. 19; 2 Kings xxv. 29.

hath lift up his *heel against me*] Lit. *made great the heel*: spurned me with brutal violence, exerted himself to trip me up and throw me down. Cp. lv. 12; Jer. ix. 4.

The words 'he that eateth my bread lifted up his heel against me' are quoted by Christ in John xiii. 18 as fulfilled by the treachery of Judas.

But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me, 10
And raise me up, that I may requite them.
By this I know that thou favourest me, 11
Because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.
And *as for* me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, 12
And settest me before thy face for ever.

The words of the Psalm are not a direct prediction, but the treachery and the fate of Ahithophel foreshadowed the treachery and the fate of Judas. What saints of old time had suffered by the desertion of friends must be suffered with an aggravated bitterness by the Son of Man. Their experience must be fulfilled in His. Cp. John xvii. 12; Acts i. 16. See Introd. p. lxxix.

10—12. After describing his urgent need, the Psalmist resumes his prayer from *v.* 4, and affirms his confident assurance of God's favour.

10. *But thou, O Jehovah*, in contrast to their malignity, *be thou gracious unto me*: though they say 'he shall rise up no more,' *raise me up*.

that I may requite them.] The words have a vindictive ring, which is startling, and seems inconsistent with vii. 4; Prov. xx. 22. Yet if the speaker was David, conscious of his divine appointment to be king, he might well pray that he might be restored to punish traitors as they deserved. For the most part he would leave vengeance to Jehovah (1 Sam. xxv. 33; 2 Sam. iii. 39), yet in this instance he might feel that he would be acting as Jehovah's instrument, in punishing those who were conspiring to resist His purposes. See Introd. p. xc f.

11. **By this I know that thou delightest in me.**

In the confidence of faith he can use the present: *I know*. Cp. xx. 6. For *delightest in me*, cp. xviii. 19; xxii. 8; xxxv. 27; 2 Sam. xv. 26.

doth not triumph] Lit. *raise a shout of victory*. Cp. xxv. 2 (a different Heb. word); xxx. 1; xxxv. 19; xxxviii. 16.

12. Cp. xxvi. 11; lxiii. 8. *Thou upholdest* (lit. *hast upheld*) is either a reference to past mercies, or more probably a retrospect from the standpoint of deliverance granted. *In mine integrity* is no contradiction to *v.* 4. Integrity (vii. 8; xv. 2) is not synonymous with sinlessness.

and settest me before thy face for ever] His enemies hope that his name will perish. He knows that he will be admitted to stand in the presence of the King of Kings. Cp. xi. 7 (note); xvi. 11; xvii. 15; lxi. 7; and the fundamental promise in 2 Sam. vii. 16 (read *before me* with LXX).

Thus the first book of the Psalter ends with a hope, destined to be illuminated with a new light by the revelation of the Gospel. See Rev. xxii. 4.

13 Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to
everlasting. Amen, and Amen.

13. This doxology is of course no part of the Psalm, but stands here to mark the close of Book i. Cp. lxxii. 18, 19; lxxxix. 52; cvi. 48.

Blessed be *the* LORD *God of Israel*] Better as R. V., **Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel.** LORD answers to the Name Jehovah, and is not an attribute to *God of Israel*. Cp. David's doxology, 1 Kings i. 48; 1 Chr. xxix. 10; and Solomon's, 1 Kings viii. 15; also Ezra vii. 27; Neh. ix. 5; Luke i. 68.

from everlasting, and to everlasting] From all eternity in the past to all eternity in the future: in the eternal present of the divine existence. Cp. xc. 2; xciii. 2; ciii. 17.

Amen, and Amen] So it is: the response of the congregation, affirming the ascription of praise on their own behalf (cvi. 48).

THE PSALMS.

BOOK II.

PSALMS XLII—LXXII.

THE SECOND BOOK OF PSALMS.

THE Second and Third Books (Pss. xlii—lxxxix) form the second principal division of the Psalter. The greater part of it (Pss. xlii—lxxxiii) is known as the 'Elohistic' collection, because the appellative *Elōhīm*, 'God,' is employed throughout it in the place and almost to the exclusion of the proper name *Jehovah*, A.V. 'LORD' or 'GOD.' This peculiarity is due, in all probability, to the hand of the editor who made the collection by combining a selection of Psalms taken from three sources: (1) a collection of Psalms preserved and used by the Levitical family or guild of the Korahites: (2) a collection bearing the name of David: (3) a collection bearing the name of Asaph, and probably preserved in the family or guild of Asaph. To the Elohistic collection is attached an appendix containing Psalms taken from the Korahite hymnary and other sources, which have not been altered by the Elohistic editor. This collection, perhaps at first without, and afterwards with, the appendix, was probably at one time in circulation as a separate book. See *Introd.* pp. liii ff.

The first seven Psalms in Book ii (if we reckon xlii and xliii as one) are described in their titles as of the sons of Korah. This rendering of the R.V. is certainly to be preferred to that of the A.V. *for the sons of K.*, which is explained to mean that these Psalms were delivered to the Korahites to be set to music and performed; and the title indicates in all probability (see p. xxix) that the Psalms bearing it were taken from a collection

bearing some such name as "The book of the songs of the Sons of Korah."

Korah was the grandson of Kohath and great-grandson of Levi. When he perished for the part which he took in the famous rebellion against Moses, his family escaped (Num. xvi: xxvi. 11), and his descendants held important offices.

Korahites acted as sentinels of the camp of the Levites: they were warders of the sacred Tent erected by David[1]; and to them was assigned the office of porters or door-keepers of the Temple, which they resumed after the Return from Babylon (1 Chron. ix. 17 ff.; xxvi. 1 ff.; Neh. xi. 19)[2].

Korahites were also connected with the service of sacred song in the Temple. Heman, one of David's three principal musicians, was a Korahite (1 Chron. vi. 31—33), and his sons were the leaders of fourteen out of the twenty-four courses of Temple musicians (1 Chron. xxv. 4 ff.).

There is an allusion to them as singers in the history of the reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xx. 19), but in the post-exilic period they are only mentioned as door-keepers and not as musicians. Jehuel and Shimei, two of Heman's descendants, are named in 2 Chron. xxix. 14 as taking part in Hezekiah's reformation.

The common characteristics of the Korahite Psalms have been somewhat exaggerated. The collection includes, as we should expect a Levitical collection to do, Psalms which breathe a spirit of strong devotion to the Temple, and heartfelt delight in its services (xlii—xliii: lxxxiv), and Psalms which celebrate with enthusiastic pride the praise of Jerusalem as "the city of God," which He has chosen for His own abode, and in which He reigns as King (xlvi, xlvii, xlviii, lxxxvii). But these thoughts are not confined to these Psalms[3]; and other features have been pointed out as peculiar, which do not amount to *distinctive*

[1] It is uncertain whether the Korahites who joined David at Ziklag (1 Chron. xii. 6) belonged to the Levitical family, or to that of the Judahite Korah settled at Hebron (1 Chron. ii. 43).

[2] It is doubtful whether Ps. lxxxiv. 10 is really, as has been supposed, an allusion to this important office. See note on the passage.

[3] See *e.g.* for the first, Pss. lxiii, lxv; for the second, Ps. xxiv.

characteristics common to these Psalms as a group, or which, as in the case of the Divine names, are due to the editor, not to the original authors[1].

In fact the variety of thought and type in the Psalms included in this collection is more remarkable than their similarity. There are (1) *personal* Psalms, expressive of the most intense personal devotion (xlii—xliii, lxxxiv), and, if lxxxviii is included among the Korahite Psalms, a most pathetic prayer in a situation of the deepest distress: (2) *national* Psalms, of which one (xliv) is a prayer in time of grave calamity, others (xlvi—xlviii) are thanksgivings for a marvellous deliverance, another (lxxxv) is a combination of thanksgiving and prayer. (3) Ps. xlv is a congratulatory ode on the marriage of a king: Ps. xlix is a didactic poem, closely related (as is also lxxxviii) to the 'Wisdom literature': Ps. lxxxvii breathes the largest spirit of prophetic universalism. The Korahite Psalms form in fact a strikingly representative selection, though, as might be expected, the public and national elements predominate.

As regards the date of these Psalms, the group included in the Elohistic collection should be distinguished from the Psalms in the appendix to it. Of the former (xlii—xlix) some certainly belong to the time of the Monarchy (xlv, xlvi, xlviii); none are certainly later than the Fall of the Kingdom: of the latter, some may date from the time of the Monarchy, but one at least (lxxxv) is later than the Return.

[1] Thus though *Jehovah Tsebāōth* occurs six times in Korahite Pss. (xlvi. 7, 11; xlviii. 8; lxxxiv. 1, 3, 12) and only once besides in the Psalter (xxiv. 10), it is only found in three out of eleven Psalms, and of these two (xlvi, xlviii) are the work of the same poet. But in view of the alteration which the Divine names have undergone, it can hardly be distinguished from *Jehovah Elōhīm Tsebāōth*, which occurs not only in the Korahite Ps., lxxxiv. 8, but in a Davidic Ps., lix. 5, and an Asaphic Ps., lxxx. 4, 19, which also has *Elōhīm Tsebāōth* (*vv.* 7, 14), which can be nothing but the editorial equivalent for *Jehovah Tsebāōth*. The peculiar *Adonai Jehovah Tsebāōth* in lxix. 6 is probably due to the editor: the form in lxxxix. 8 is not unfrequent in the prophets.

PSALMS XLII AND XLIII.

These two Psalms form a connected poem, consisting of three equal stanzas, each ending with the same refrain. The same circumstances appear to lie in the background, and the tone, spirit, and language are the same throughout. The prayer of Ps. xliii is needed to supplement the complaint of Ps. xlii.

It is possible that some interval of time separated the composition of Ps. xliii from that of Ps. xlii, or even that they were the work of different poets, and that from the first they were separate poems; but it is far more probable that they are the work of the same poet, and that they originally formed one poem, which has been divided for liturgical or devotional purposes. This division is ancient, for it appears in the majority of Hebrew MSS., and in all Ancient Versions. In some MSS. the two Psalms appear to be united, but this may be due to the absence of any title to mark the beginning of Ps. xliii. The absence of a title, however, indicates that the division was made after the formation of the Elohistic collection, in which all the Psalms, with the exception of this and lxxi, are furnished with titles. See *Introd.*, p. liv.

The author of these Psalms was one who had been wont to conduct processions of pilgrims to the Temple for the great festivals with joyous songs of praise. But now he is forcibly debarred from going up to the worship of the sanctuary. He describes the locality where he is detained as "the land of Jordan and the range of Hermon," the district in which the Jordan takes its rise from the roots of Hermon. "Mount Mizar" was doubtless some hill in the neighbourhood, though it cannot now be identified. He is surrounded by inhuman heathen enemies (xliii. 1), who continually taunt him with being deserted by his God (xlii. 3, 10; xliii. 2). His faith is sorely tried; but he is confident that he will soon be allowed once more to go up to Jerusalem, and join in the services of the sanctuary.

Who was he and when did he live? The inclusion of the Psalm in the Korahite collection makes it probable that he was a Korahite Levite; and this probability is confirmed by his enthusiastic love for the Temple services, by the part he was accustomed to take in the festal pilgrimages, and by his skill as a musician (xlii. 8; xliii. 4). The Temple was standing and its services were being regularly carried on. So far however as this Psalm is concerned there is nothing to shew whether it was written before or after the Exile. But its close connexion with Ps. lxxxiv is in favour of assigning it to the earlier period. That Psalm presents such striking resemblances in tone and spirit, in language, and in structure, that it may well have been written by the same author under happier circumstances; and if *v.* 9 is understood (as it is most natural to understand it) as a prayer for the king, it must belong to the period of the monarchy. Ps. lxiii, and in a less degree Ps. lxi, which belong to the same period, also present affinities. The coincidences with Joel (see notes on xlii. 1, 3, and cp. lxxxiv. 6), and

the use of the Psalm in the prayer of Jonah (see on xlii. 7), are noteworthy, but in the uncertainty as to the date of these books, throw no additional light on the question. The circumstances under which the Psalmist found himself debarred from going up to Jerusalem and exposed to the taunts of heathen conquerors might have happened at many different periods, in one of the Syrian or Assyrian invasions, or after the northern kingdom had ceased to exist.

More definite conjectures as to the date lack probability. Delitzsch attributes the Psalm to a Korahite Levite who accompanied David in his flight to Mahanaim, in Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. xv. 24). But the Psalm contains no allusions to the circumstances of the rebellion; David was among sympathising friends, not among mocking heathen enemies; and Mahanaim was too distant from Hermon to suit the description of the locality in *v.* 6. Ewald thinks that the Psalm was written by Jehoiachin, as he halted for a night in the neighbourhood of Hermon on his way to exile in Babylon. But there is not the slightest hint that the Psalmist was a king: he does not appear to be an actual prisoner, or a mere temporary sojourner in the neighbourhood of Hermon: he expects soon to be able to go up to Jerusalem again, whereas Jehoiachin had nothing before him but the prospect of a life-long captivity. Hitzig, followed so far as the date is concerned by Cheyne, attributes the Psalm to the high-priest Onias iii, whom he supposes to have been carried away prisoner by the Egyptian general Scopas, when after the capture of Jerusalem he marched northwards to be defeated by Antiochus the Great, near the source of the Jordan (Jos. *Antiq.* xii. 3. 3), in B.C. 199—198. But the inclusion of the Psalm in the Elohistic collection, to say nothing of the arguments already given for assigning the Psalm to the period of the monarchy, renders so late a date extremely improbable. See Intr. to Ps. xliv.

Happily the poetic beauty and the devotional earnestness of the Psalm are independent of all doubts as to its date and authorship. It is a monument of the spirituality and the joyousness of the religion of Israel. If the writer yearns for renewed access to the earthly sanctuary, it is that in the appointed place and by the appointed means he may realise that communion with God which is the soul's highest happiness. The Latin hymn *Ut iucundas cervus undas* (Trench, *Sacred Latin Poetry*, No. lii) is a beautiful development of the theme of this Psalm.

The structure of the poem is symmetrical and artistic. It consists of three equal stanzas, each closed by the same refrain. Many of the lines fall into the peculiar 'lamentation-rhythm.'

i. The yearning of the Psalmist's soul for God strikes the keynote of the Psalm (1, 2): and in his present sorrow he finds sad comfort in the recollection of former happiness (3, 4).

ii. He describes his pitiable plight (6, 7); and recalling past mercies, expostulates with God for having abandoned him to the taunts of his foes (8—10).

iii. He prays for deliverance from these enemies (xliii. 1, 2), and restoration to the privileges of the sanctuary (3, 4).

In the refrain which closes each stanza faith rebukes despondency and hope triumphs over despair (5, 11, xliii. 5).

Psalm XLII.

To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah.

42 As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God.
2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:
When shall I come and appear before God?
3 My tears have been my meat day and night,
While *they* continually say unto me, Where *is* thy God?

On the title, which should be rendered, with R.V., **For the Chief Musician; Maschil of the sons of Korah**, see *Introd.* pp. xix, xxi, xxxiii, and p. 223.

1, 2. The yearning of the Psalmist's soul for communion with God.

1. **As a hind which panteth for water-brooks,**
So panteth my soul for Thee, O God.

Render **hind**, not *hart*, for the verb is feminine, and the timorous hind is the apter emblem for the soul. The parallel in Joel i. 20 (the only other instance of the verb) makes it clear that the figure is suggested by the sufferings of wild animals in a prolonged drought (cp. Jer. xiv. 5 f.), not by the hind "heated in the chase," and deterred by the fear of its pursuers from descending into the valley to slake its thirst.

2. *thirsteth*] Cp. lxiii. 1; Am. viii. 11—13. God, who is *the living God*, in contrast to dead impotent idols, is "the fountain of living waters" (Jer. ii. 13; xvii. 13). With Him is "the fountain of life," and He gives men drink from the stream of His delights (xxxvi. 8, 9). The phrase for 'living God' (*El chay*) is found elsewhere only in Josh. iii. 10; Ps. lxxxiv. 2; Hos. i. 10. In Deut. v. 26; 1 Sam. xvii. 26, 36; 2 Kings xix. 4, 16 (=Is. xxxvii. 4, 17); Jer. x. 10, xxiii. 36; the Heb. word for God is *Elōhim*.

appear before God] The regular formula for the stated visits to the Temple at the three great Festivals (Ex. xxiii. 17; Ps. lxxxiv. 7). Grammatical considerations however make it probable that here and in some other passages (e.g. Ex. xxiii. 15; xxxiv. 20; Deut. xxxi. 11; Is. i. 12) we should read, by a simple change of the vowel-points, *see the face of God*. The usual phrase for admission to the presence of a superior (Gen. xliii. 3) was applied to visiting the sanctuary; but since man cannot literally *see God* (Ex. xxxiii. 20), it was supplemented by the synonymous phrase *appear before God*, which came to be generally adopted as more seemly in the traditional method of reading the consonantal text. But cp. xi. 7 note; xvii. 15; lxiii. 2.

3, 4. Present sorrow contrasted with past happiness.

3. *my meat*] Lit. *my bread*. Cp. lxxx. 5; cii. 4, 9. Tears take the place of his daily food. So Ovid, *Metam.* x. 75, "Cura dolorque animi lacrimaeque alimenta fuere."

continually] Lit. *all the day*, and so in *v.* 10.

Where is *thy God*] Cp. lxxix. 10; cxv. 2; Joel ii. 17; Mic. vii. 10.

When I remember these *things*, I pour out my soul in me: 4
For I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to
the house of God,
With the voice of joy and praise, *with* a multitude that kept
holyday.
Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and *why* art thou 5
disquieted in me?

The bitterest ingredient in his cup of sorrow is the taunt of the heathen that his plight demonstrates the impotence or indifference of the God Whom he serves.

4. This let me remember as I pour out my soul upon me,
How I was wont to pass on with the throng, leading them to the house of God,
With the voice of singing and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

He must needs give free course to his feelings, to the emotional part of his nature, as he thinks of the past. The renderings *in me* (A.V.) or *within me* (R.V.) miss the idiomatic force of the preposition which means *upon me*. The soul (as elsewhere the heart or the spirit) is distinguished from a man's whole 'self,' and regarded as acting upon it from without. See Delitzsch, *Biblical Psychology*, pp. 179 ff. Cp. *vv.* 5, 6, 11, xliii. 5; cxxxi. 2; cxlii. 3; Lam. iii. 20; Job xxx. 16; Jer. viii. 18.

How I was wont to pass on. The tense denotes that it was his *custom* thus to conduct pilgrims to Jerusalem for the festivals. The joyousness of these processions was proverbial (Is. xxx. 29; cp. xxxv. 10; li. 11).

But what is the connexion of thought? Is it that he indulges in the recollection of the past, as a luxury of grief, because "a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things"? Or is it not rather that the retrospect is the best antidote to the sneers of the heathen? The God, in Whose service he once found such delight, cannot really have deserted him. The verse will then form the natural transition to *v.* 5. Cp. *v.* 6, and lxxvii. 11.

Leading them. The word is found elsewhere only in Is. xxxviii. 15. It seems to denote the slow and stately march of a solemn procession, and may be rendered as in R.V. marg. *went in procession with them*, or, with a slight change of vowels, taken transitively.

5. In this refrain the truer 'self' chides the weaker 'soul,' the emotional nature, for its despondency and complaint.

cast down] Bowed down as a mourner. Cp. xxxv. 14; xxxviii. 6.

The resemblance of our Lord's words in Gethsemane (Matt. xxvi. 38; Mk. xiv. 34) to the Sept. rendering of this verse, *Why art thou exceeding sorrowful, O my soul?* (ἵνα τί περίλυπος εἶ, ἡ ψυχή;) suggests that this Psalm may have been in His mind at the time; the more so as He appears to use the words of *v.* 6, which the Sept. renders, *My soul is troubled* (ἡ ψυχή μου ἐταράχθη), in a similar connexion upon another

Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him
For the help of his countenance.

6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee
From the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.

occasion (John xii. 27). In view of this it is interesting to remember that the hart is a common emblem for our Lord in Christian art.

disquieted in me] Lit. *moanest*, or *frettest upon me*, the same idiom as in *v.* 4. Cp. lxxvii. 3; Jer. iv. 19.

hope thou in God] Or, *wait thou for God*. Cp. xxxviii. 15; xxxix. 7; Mic. vii. 7.

praise him] Or, **give him thanks**, as in past time (*v.* 4).

for *the help of his countenance*] This is the reading of the Massoretic Text. But the construction is peculiar, and the LXX and Syr. suggest that we ought to read here as in *v.* 11, and xliii. 5, (**Who is**) **the help of my countenance and my God**. But *O my God* should be retained at the beginning of *v.* 6, where it is needed[1]. *The help* (lit. *salvations*, the plur. denoting manifold and great deliverances, as in xxviii. 8) *of my countenance* is a periphrasis for *my help*, facilitated by phrases like *to look upon* or *turn away the face* of a person (lxxxiv. 9; cxxii. 10).

6—11. From self he turns to God and pleads his cause.

6. *Within me*, or rather, as in *v.* 4, **upon me**, stands emphatically at the beginning of the sentence. His own feelings overwhelm him, and therefore he must turn to God, whose goodness he can call to mind, remote though he is from the place where God's presence is specially manifested. He describes the place from which he speaks as **the land of Jordan and the Hermons**, probably the neighbourhood of Dan (*Tell-el-Kâdi*) or Caesarea Philippi (*Banias*), where the Jordan rises from the roots of Hermon. The plural *Hermons* either denotes the Hermon range in general or refers to the three peaks in which Mount Hermon culminates. *The hill Mizar* or **mount Mizar** was probably some hill in the immediate neighbourhood of which he was[2]; perhaps some point whence he could command a view of the hills beyond the Jordan, over which he would fain be travelling to Jerusalem. Its name—*the little mountain*—may perhaps be meant to contrast its insignificance with the fame and splendour of God's holy mountain where he desires to be (xliii. 3; xlviii. 1, 2).

[1] The error arose very simply from the transference of the י from the beginning of ואלהי to the end of פני, so that פני ואלהי became פניו אלהי. Then אלהי was assumed to be merely an accidental repetition of אלהי at the beginning of *v.* 6, and dropped out.

[2] Prof. G. A. Smith notes that there are in the same neighbourhood "two or three names with the same or kindred radicals," and suggests that they may be "a reminiscence of the name of a hill in this district." *Hist. Geogr. of the Holy Land*, p. 477.

Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: 7
All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.
Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the day- 8
time,
And in the night his song *shall be* with me,
And my prayer unto the God of my life.

7. *at the noise of thy waterspouts*] Better, **in the roar of thy cataracts.** God is sending upon him one trouble after another. He is overwhelmed with a flood of misfortunes. The metaphorical language is derived from the surrounding scenery. The roar of the cataracts calling to one another from opposite sides of the valley is like the voice of one abyss of waters (xxxiii. 7 note) summoning another to break forth and join in overwhelming him. The torrents and eddies of the Jordan suggest the breakers and waves of calamity which have gone over his head. Tristram in describing Banias speaks of "the impetuous stream which has hewn out its channel in the black basalt," and of the "wild medley of cascades and dashing torrents" everywhere (*Land of Israel*, p. 573). According to Robinson (*Researches*, iii. 405) "in the rainy season, and at the time of the melting of the snow on Hermon, an immense volume of water must rush down the chasm" below the ridge on which the castle stands. It might be supposed that the figure of *breakers and waves* must have been suggested by the sea, but no one who has seen mountain streams in spate will doubt that the words might refer to the Jordan in flood. The winter rainfall in Palestine is enormous. See Tristram's *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 31.

v. 7 *b* is borrowed in Jonah's prayer (Jon. ii. 3).

8. According to the rendering of the A.V., retained by the R.V., this verse expresses the Psalmist's confidence that he will soon again experience the favour of God, and give Him thanks for His goodness. But it is equally possible to render

In the day-time Jehovah used to give his lovingkindness
charge concerning me,
And in the night his song was with me,
Even prayer unto the God of my life.

This rendering gives the best connexion of thought. The verse is a retrospect like *v.* 4, and is a further explanation of the 'remembering God' of which he speaks in *v.* 6. He contrasts the present, in which tears are his constant food (*v.* 3) and God's indignation seems to be let loose upon him, with the past, in which God's lovingkindness constantly watched over him, and glad songs of praise to Him were his constant companions. *In the day time* and *in the night*, though divided between the two lines for rhythmical reasons, are to be connected together (=*continually*), and taken as referring equally to both clauses. Cp. xcii. 2. God's lovingkindness, like His light and truth in xliii. 3, is almost personified as the Psalmist's guardian angel.

Prayer denotes any form of communion with God: here predominantly thanksgiving. Cp. 1 Sam. ii. 1; Hab. iii. 1.

With the beautiful phrase *the God of my life* cp. lxvi. 9; and Ecclesi-

9 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me?
Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
10 *As* with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me;
While they say daily unto me, Where *is* thy God?
11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him,
Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

asticus xxiii. 1, 4, "O Lord, Father and Master" (δέσποτα) of my life";..."Father and God of my life."

The LORD] Contrary to the general rule in Book ii (*Introd.* p. lv) the name JEHOVAH has been retained here; unless it is the insertion or alteration of a later editor.

9—11. Having thus recalled God's mercy in the past he expostulates with Him for having abandoned him, and exposed him to the sneers of his enemies.

9. *I will say*] Or, *Let me say*, the tense (voluntative, as in *v.* 4) emphatically expressing his resolution.

my rock] The word, lit. my *cliff* or *crag* (*sela*), is used of God as a refuge only in xviii. 2 (=2 Sam. xxii. 2); xxxi. 3 (=lxxi. 3). On the more common word for *rock* (*tsur*) see note on xviii. 2 (A.V. *my strength*).

The original edition of the A.V. (1611) has *unto God, My rock, why*; treating *my rock* as a vocative, with LXX and Jerome. Editions of 1612 and 1630 have *God, my rock*, אל סלעי: and the usual punctuation *God my rock, Why* appears to have been introduced in editions of 1629, 1638. See Scrivener, *Authorised Ed. of the English Bible*, p. 165.

Why &c.] Not a demand for explanation, but the expostulation of perplexity. Cp. xiii. 1; xxii. 1; lxxvii. 9; lxxxviii. 14.

mourning] Cp. xxxv. 14, xxxviii. 6; Job xxx. 28.

because of the oppression of the enemy] Or, as R.V. marg. (cp. P.B.V.), *while the enemy oppresseth*. The substantive occurs in the Psalter only here and in xliii. 2; xliv. 24; the verb only in lvi. 1; cvi. 42. Both are used elsewhere, especially of the oppression of Israel by foreign invaders (Jud. ii. 18; 1 Sam. x. 18; 2 Kings xiii. 4; Am. vi. 14; &c.).

10. My bones are smitten asunder with mine adversaries' reproaches,
While they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?

Lit. *with crushing in my bones do mine adversaries reproach me.* They stab him to the heart with their taunts. 'The bones,' in the language of Hebrew poetry, denote the whole physical organism of the living man, as being the framework of it. They are the seat of pain; and mental torture affects the body. Cp. vi. 2 (note); Lam. iii. 4; Is. xxxviii. 13.

Psalm XLIII.

Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly 43
nation:
O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.
For thou *art* the God of my strength: why dost thou cast 2
me off?
Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the
enemy?
O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; 3
Let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.
Then will I go unto the altar of God, 4

xliii. 1—5. A passionate prayer for deliverance from his enemies and restoration to the privileges of the sanctuary.

1, 2. Prayer for deliverance, grounded upon God's relation to him.

1. *Judge me* &c.] An appeal to God the Judge to do him justice and vindicate his innocence by delivering him from the power of his insolent foes. For the language cp. vii. 8; xxvi. 1; xxxv. 1, 24.

against an ungodly nation] Lit. *from*, i.e. by delivering me from, *a nation without lovingkindness*; heathen destitute of all feeling of humanity. For the meaning of *chāsīd* see notes on iv. 3; xii. 1; and Appendix, Note i.

the deceitful and unjust man] The leader of the heathen, who had distinguished himself by treachery and malignity, may be meant. But it is better to understand the words collectively as a further description of the 'inhuman nation' in general, men of deceit and malignity.

2. *the God of my strength*] Or, my stronghold God: my natural refuge and protector. Cp. xviii. 2; xlii. 9. But facts seem to contradict faith, and the expostulation of xlii. 9 is repeated in a stronger form: Why hast thou cast me off (xliv. 9, 23)? and in the next line a more emphatic form of the verb *go* is used, meaning *go about by myself*.

3, 4. Prayer for restoration.

3. *O send out thy light and thy truth*] Cp. lvii. 3. God's light and truth, like His lovingkindness in xlii. 8, are almost personified. As of old He gave His lovingkindness charge concerning His servant, so now may He manifest the light of His countenance, and evermore shew him favour (xxxvi. 9; xliv. 3); and thus prove Himself true to His own character and His promises.

let them lead me &c.] Is the Psalmist thinking of the wonders of the Exodus? Cp. Ex. xiii. 21; xv. 13.

tabernacles] Or, *dwelling-place*. Cp. xxvi. 8; xlvi. 4; lxxxiv. 1. The plural may be 'amplificative,' expressive of the dignity of the Temple as the dwelling-place of God; or it may be used with reference to the various courts and buildings of which it was composed.

4. *Then will I go*] Or, That I may come (xlii. 2).

Unto God my exceeding joy:
Yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.
5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou
disquieted within me?
Hope in God: for I shall yet praise him,
Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

unto God my exceeding joy] Even unto the God of my gladsome rejoicing. God Himself is the goal of pilgrimage: the altar is but the means of approaching Him and realising His presence.

Yea, upon the harp will I praise thee] And give thanks unto thee upon the harp, as of old (xlii. 4).

O God my God] A phrase found only in the Elohistic Psalms, and clearly the equivalent of *Jehovah my God*, due, not to the original Psalmist, but to the Elohistic editor. See *Introd.* p. lvi.

5. The refrain is once more repeated, and now, we may believe, with a still more unwavering faith and certain hope that his prayer will be answered.

PSALM XLIV.

This Psalm is the appeal of the nation to God in a time of unmerited disaster and humiliation.

i. It begins by recalling the mighty deeds of God for His people in the days of old. It was God Himself who drove out the nations from Canaan, and planted Israel in their place. By His might and not by their own valour was the victory won (1—3).

ii. From the past they have been wont to draw assurance for the present. To Him they still trust for victory and not to themselves, for He is their King and they are His loyal subjects (4—8).

iii. But facts contradict faith. God has surrendered them to their enemies, and abandoned them to the scorn and derision of neighbouring nations (9—16).

iv. And this suffering is undeserved. No faithlessness on their part accounts for it as a punishment. Nay, it is for His sake that they are being persecuted (17—22).

v. The Psalm closes with an urgent appeal for speedy help (23—26).

This Psalm is one of those which have most generally and most confidently been assigned to the Maccabean period. It is argued that the general tone of the Psalm and the reference to the dispersion of the nation (*v.* 11) prove it to be post-exilic; that we know of no earlier time in the post-exilic period when the nation possessed an army (*v.* 9); that then, as never before, it could plead its fidelity to Jehovah. The persecution of Antiochus was preeminently a religious persecution, in which the Jews were slaughtered and sold into slavery by thousands for their faith's sake. They were fighting not only for their lives but for their laws.

Those however who assign the Psalm to the Maccabaean period are not agreed as to the particular occasion to which it refers. The most plausible suggestion is that which connects it with the reverse sustained by Judas at Beth-Zachariah, which was followed by the surrender of Beth-zur, and the reduction of the defenders of the Temple to the greatest extremities (1 Macc. vi. 28 ff.). It cannot refer to the early days of the persecution of Antiochus, for then the Jews had no army: nor to the defeat of Joseph and Azariah at Jamnia (1 Macc. v. 56 ff.), for that defeat was the result of self-willed disobedience, and arrogant self-assertion (*v.* 61): nor to disasters after the death of Judas (1 Macc. ix), for the alliance which he had just contracted with Rome (1 Macc. viii) was incompatible with that exclusive reliance upon Jehovah which the Psalmist so emphatically professes.

No doubt many of the features of the Psalm seem to reflect the circumstances of the Maccabaean period. But the closeness of the correspondence has been exaggerated. Could the Psalmist protest that the nation was faithful to its God, when the high-priest Jason had but recently introduced Greek customs into Jerusalem, and been followed by a multitude of willing apostates (1 Macc. i. 11 ff.)? Moreover, although an argument from silence is precarious, it would certainly be strange that a Psalm of the Maccabaean period should contain no reference to the desecration of the Temple, or to the attempt to destroy the national religion and enforce heathen customs.

The most convincing argument however against a Maccabaean date for this Psalm is to be derived from the history of the formation of the Psalter. The 'Elohistic' collection in which it is found was certainly anterior to the collections contained in Books iv and v (*Introd.* pp. lvi ff.), and must on any hypothesis have been formed earlier than the Maccabaean age, while the subordinate collections which are incorporated in it carry us back to an earlier date still. Now while it is *possible* that a Maccabaean Psalmist might have "thrown himself into the spirit of the original collector and made his additions Elohistic to correspond to the earlier Psalms," and might even have furnished the Psalm with a title which no longer had any meaning, it is, to say the least, extremely improbable[1]. The internal indications of a Maccabaean date must be overwhelming in order to justify such a bold hypothesis.

It is however easier to arrive at the negative conclusion that the Maccabaean date is untenable than to suggest a satisfactory alternative. Delitzsch connects this Psalm with Ps. lx, and accepting the title of that Psalm as trustworthy, supposes that the occasion of both Psalms was an Edomite raid upon Judah while David was occupied with his campaign against the Ammonites and Syrians. There is certainly a remarkable affinity between this Psalm and Ps. lx; and in David's reign the people could boast of their faithfulness to Jehovah in marked contrast to the

[1] See Robertson Smith, *Old Test. in Jewish Church*, ed. 2, pp. 207, 437. Sanday, *Bampton Lectures*, pp. 256, 270, draws out in detail the number of steps implied between the original composition of the Hebrew Psalm and the Greek Version of the Psalter, and shews that if, as many believe, the Greek Version of the Psalter is not later than B.C. 100, it is almost incredible that they can have been compressed into a space of seventy years.

repeated apostasies of the age of the Judges. Lagarde points to the close resemblance between *v.* 16 and Is. xxxvii. 6, 23, 24, and assigns the Psalm to the time of Sennacherib's invasion. Robertson Smith (*O. T. J. C.*, ed. 2, p. 207) refers it, along with Pss. lxxiv, lxxix, lxxx, to the rebellion of the Jews under Artaxerxes Ochus (*circa* 350 B.C.), which was put down with great severity.

It is impossible to decide with certainty; but the Psalm produces a strong impression that it belongs to the time when Israel had still an independent existence as a nation, and was accustomed to make war upon its enemies. If so, it must be assigned to the period of the Monarchy, for at no time after the exile, so far as we know, down to the Maccabaean period, was Israel in a position to make war. The exile is not necessarily presumed by *v.* 11. All that the verse need mean is that prisoners had been taken and sold for slaves, as was the case in the eighth century (Amos i. 6, 9), and doubtless in earlier times.

The Psalm stands alone in its confident assertions of national fidelity to Jehovah, which may be contrasted with the confessions of national guilt in Is. lxiii, lxiv, and Lam. iii. But it must be noticed carefully that it is not an absolute but a relative assertion of innocence. It resembles that of Job. He made no claim of absolute sinlessness, but protested that he was conscious of no exceptional sin which would account for his exceptional afflictions on the current theory of retribution; and the Psalmist is conscious of no national apostasy which would account for Jehovah's desertion of His people as a justly merited punishment.

The parallels with Ps. lx should be carefully studied. The situation is similar: in both Psalms the thought of God, not man, as the deliverer is prominent: and there are several parallels of language. Comp. xliv. 9, 23 with lx. 1, 10; xliv. 5 with lx. 12; xliv. 3 with lx. 5. Several links of connexion with Pss. xlii, xliii will also be found in the notes.

To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, Maschil.

44 We have heard with our ears, O God,
Our fathers have told us,

On the title, which should be rendered with R.V., **For the Chief Musician; (a Psalm) of the sons of Korah. Maschil**, see *Introd.* pp. xix, xxi, xxxiii; and p. 223.

1—3. A retrospect. Not their own valour but God's help and favour gave Israel possession of the land of Canaan.

1. *our fathers have told us*] In obedience to the often repeated injunction to hand on the memory of God's marvellous works on behalf of His people. See Ex. x. 2; xii. 26 f.; xiii. 8, 14; Deut. vi. 20; Josh. iv. 6, 21. Cp. Judg. vi. 13; Ps. lxxviii. 3. Observe the importance attached to oral tradition as a means of perpetuating the memory of the past. Much of the early history of Israel was doubtless preserved by oral tradition for a long period before it was committed to writing.

What work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.
How thou didst drive out the heathen *with* thy hand, and 2
plantedst them;
How thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out.
For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, 3
Neither did their own arm save them:
But thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy
countenance,
Because thou hadst a favour unto them.
Thou *art* my King, O God: 4
Command deliverances for Jacob.

in the times of old] Better, even the days of old. Cp. Is. xxxvii. 26 (A.V., *of ancient times*).

2. With thine own hand didst thou dispossess nations, and plant them in,
Didst afflict peoples, and cause them to spread abroad.

Thou with thy hand are the first words of the verse in the Heb., emphasising by their position the prominent thought of this stanza, that Israel owed its possession of Canaan not to its own courage but to Jehovah's help. The metaphor of *planting* is frequently applied to the establishment of Israel in Canaan (cp. Ex. xv. 17; 2 Sam. vii. 10), and it is continued in the next line, where the rendering **cause them to spread abroad** is commended by the usage of the word and by the parallelism. Israel is compared to a tree which struck root and spread its branches far and wide. Cp. lxxx. 8 ff, 11. Note the artistic parallelism, the first clause in each line referring to the nations, the second to Israel.

3. The thought of the preceding verse is still further emphasised.
For not by their own sword gat they possession of the land,
Neither did their own arm give them victory:
But thy right hand, &c.

Cp. lx. 5; Josh. iv. 24.

the light of thy countenance] Cp. iv. 6; xxxi. 16; lxxx. 3, 7, 19; and the Aaronic benediction in Num. vi. 24 ff.

hadst a favour unto them] God's free choice, not Israel's merit, was the ground of His intervention on their behalf. Cp. Deut. iv. 37; viii. 17, 18; ix. 4, 6.

4—8. The recollection of the past gives confidence for the present and the future. God's strength must still avail for the deliverance of His people, and in Him alone do they trust.

4. *my King*] Cp. xlvii. 6; lxxiv. 12; 1 Sam. xii. 12. The Psalmist speaks in the name of the nation. Cp. *v.* 6.

command] Cp. xlii. 8. It is the duty of a king to defend his people (1 Sam. x. 19); and the authority of the divine King is supreme. He has but to speak the word and it must needs be obeyed.

deliverances] R.V. deliverance, marg., victories (cp. *v.* 3). The

5 Through thee will we push down our enemies:
Through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.
6 For I will not trust in my bow,
Neither shall my sword save me.
7 But thou hast saved us from our enemies,
And hast put them to shame that hated us.
8 In God we boast all the day long,
And praise thy name for ever. Selah.

9 But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame;
And goest not forth with our armies.

Heb. word is plural, denoting deliverance full and complete. Cp. xviii. 50; xlii. 5 (note).

5. *push down*] Perhaps a reminiscence of Deut. xxxiii. 17; but metaphors from horned animals are common. Cp. 1 Kings xxii. 11.

our enemies] R.V. **our adversaries**, and similarly in *vv.* 7, 10, the Heb. word being different from that in *v.* 16.

through thy name] Relying upon all that Thou hast revealed Thyself to be as the God of Israel:—an emphatic alternative for *through Thee*. The Name of God is the comprehensive expression for His revealed character and attributes. See Oehler's *O.T. Theology*, § 56. Cp. v. 11; xx. 1; Acts iii. 16.

6. Cp. xx. 7; xxxiii. 16; lx. 11 f; 1 Sam. xvii. 47; Hos. i. 7; and the noble speech of Judas Maccabaeus (1 Macc. iii. 17 ff.): "The victory of battle standeth not in the multitude of an host, but strength cometh from heaven."

7. *But*] Or, **For**. Past experience justifies the confidence of *v.* 6.

them...that hated us] R.V., **them...that hate us**. Cp. *v.* 10.

8. **Of God have we made our boast all day long,**
And unto thy name will we give thanks for ever.

God has been the object of their praises in the past, and to Him they are resolved to give thanks (xlii. 5) continually.

A musical interlude marks the conclusion of the first main division of the Psalm.

9—16. But the present circumstances of the nation contradict these expressions of faith based upon past experience. Israel is abandoned to be the scorn and prey of its foes. Comp. the transition in lxxxix. 38.

9. *But now*] The conjunction is peculiar, and implies surprise. **And then**, after all these proofs of Thy good will, and in spite of our loyalty to Thee, **hast thou cast us off and dishonoured us, and goest not forth with our hosts**; leading them to victory as in the days of old, as the God of the armies of Israel. Almost the same words recur in lx. 10. In ancient times the Ark was carried to battle as the symbol of Jehovah's presence. See Num. x. 35; Josh. vi. 6; 1 Sam. iv. 3; 2 Sam. xi. 11. Cp. also Judg. vi. 14; 2 Sam. v. 24.

Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy: 10
And they which hate us spoil for themselves.
Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat; 11
And hast scattered us among the heathen.
Thou sellest thy people for nought, 12
And dost not increase *thy wealth* by their price.
Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, 13
A scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.
Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, 14
A shaking of the head among the people.
My confusion *is* continually before me, 15
And the shame of my face hath covered me,

10. *the enemy*] R.V., **the adversary.**

spoil for themselves] Or, **plunder at their will.**

11. Some of God's people are butchered like sheep (cp. *v.* 22); others are sold as slaves. It is evidently not a deportation of the nation that is meant, but the sale of prisoners of war for slaves. Cp. Joel iii. 2, 6; Am. i. 6, 9. To the Israelite with his love of freedom and attachment to his own land such a fate seemed little better than death.

12. *Thou sellest thy people*] Handing them over to their enemies (Deut. xxxii. 30; Judg. ii. 14; Is. l. 1); and that *for nought*, as though they were worthless in Thy estimation (Jer. xv. 13): *and hast made no gain by their price*; a bold 'anthropopathy,' or ascription to God of human motives and feelings, as though the surrender of His people might have seemed more justifiable if He had received some equivalent for them. Comp. the plea in xxx. 9.

13. Repeated almost verbatim in lxxix. 4; cp. lxxx. 6. The neighbouring nations, Philistines, Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites, were always jealous of Israel, and ready to rejoice with a malicious delight at Israel's humiliation.

14. *the heathen...the people*] Render with R.V., **the nations...the peoples.** They point to our fate as a proverbial instance of a people abandoned by its God, and make us the subject of taunting songs: they shake their heads at us in derision. Cp. Deut. xxviii. 37; 1 Kings ix. 7; Jer. xxiv. 9; Joel ii. 17 (R.V. marg.); Ps. xxii. 7; and generally Lam. ii. 15 ff.

15. *My confusion* &c.] Render with R.V., **All the day long is my dishonour before me,** as in *vv.* 8, 22, 9. My disgrace is perpetually staring me in the face. Cp. xxxviii. 17.

the shame of my face &c.] Shame is said to cover or clothe a man (Job viii. 22; Ps. xxxv. 26; lxix. 7; cxxxii. 18); and *the shame of my face* is an emphatic synonym for *my shame*, inasmuch as the sense of shame betrays itself in the countenance. Cp. Ezra ix. 6 ff; Jer. vii. 19; Dan. ix. 7, 8.

16 For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth;
By reason of the enemy and avenger.
17 All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee,
Neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.
18 Our heart is not turned back,
Neither have our steps declined from thy way;
19 Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons,

16. *For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth*] The word *reproach* is frequently used of a heathen enemy's scornful defiance or mocking derision of Israel and Israelites, and by consequence of Israel's God, as though He were unable or unwilling to defend His people (xlii. 10; lxxiv. 10, 18, 22; lxxix. 4, 12; 1 Sam. xvii. 10 ff.); but the two words are found in combination elsewhere only of Sennacherib's blasphemous defiance (Is. xxxvii. 6, 23=2 Kings xix. 6, 22).

by reason of] Render **for the looks of**, or, **for the presence of**, as a better parallelism to *for the voice of*. Isaiah alludes to the terror inspired by the grim looks of the Assyrian invaders (xxxiii. 19; and for *voice* cp. Is. xxxvii. 23; Nah. ii. 13.

the enemy and the avenger] Cp. viii. 2. The Heb. word for *avenger* suggests the idea of one who is taking a *selfish* vengeance, usurping, in his own interests, a function which belongs to God alone (Deut. xxxii. 35).

17—22. The calamity is unmerited. No unfaithfulness to God's covenant has called for punishment. Nay it is for His sake that His people are suffering.

17. *All this* &c.] Cp. Judg. vi. 13.

yet have we not &c.] Although we have not forgotten Thee, as our fathers did so often. Cp. lxxviii. 7, 11; cvi. 13, 21; Judg. iii. 7; Hos. ii. 13; iv. 6; viii. 14; xiii. 6; Jer. ii. 32.

neither &c.] **Neither have we been false to thy covenant.** Cp. lxxxix. 33; "Neither will I be false to my faithfulness." God's covenant with Abraham to be a God to him and to his seed after him (Gen. xvii. 7) was confirmed to the nation at Sinai (Ex. xix. 5; xxiv. 7, 8). Its sacrament was circumcision (Gen. xvii. 2 ff): its outward symbol was the Ark of the Covenant (Num. x. 33): and its fundamental charter was the Ten Words inscribed on the Tables of the Covenant (Deut. ix. 9).

19. *Though* &c.] Comp. the vigorous paraphrase of P.B.V.; *No, not when thou hast smitten us* &c. But it is better to render

That thou shouldest have crushed us into a haunt of jackals.

The Psalmist's argument is that there has been no national apostasy for which their present disasters would be a just punishment. *A haunt of jackals* is a proverbial expression for a scene of ruin and desolation, a waste, howling wilderness, tenanted only by wild beasts (Is. xiii. 22; xxxiv. 13; Jer. ix. 11; x. 22). Some commentators (on the hypothesis of the Maccabaean date) see a reference to the butchery of the Jews who

And covered us with the shadow of death.
If we have forgotten the name of our God, 20
Or stretched out our hands to a strange god;
Shall not God search this out? 21
For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.
Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; 22
We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.
Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? 23

had fled into the wilderness to escape from the persecution of Antiochus (1 Macc. ii. 27—38). But more probably the phrase is a condensed expression, meaning 'crushed us and reduced our country to a desert.' There is some doubt however about the reading. The Sept. has, 'humbled us in a place *of affliction*.'

the shadow of death] The word *tsalmāveth* is rendered thus in the Ancient Versions, and the present vocalization assumes that this is the meaning. But compounds are rare in Hebrew except in proper names, and there are good grounds for supposing that the word is derived from a different root and should be read *tsalmūth*, and rendered *deep gloom*. It is however not improbable that the pronunciation of the word was altered at an early date in accordance with a popular etymology.

20. *spread out*] R.V., spread forth: the gesture of prayer being not, as with us, *folded* hands, but the hands extended with open palms: the Lat. 'manibus passis.' Cp. cxliii. 6; 1 Kings viii. 22, 38, 54; Isa. i. 15.

21. It would be vain to attempt to conceal any faithlessness from the Searcher of hearts. Cp. Job's protestations of innocence, ch. xxxi. 4 ff.; and Ps. cxxxix. 1, 23; Jer. xvii. 10.

22. *Yea, for thy sake*] Or, Nay, but for thy sake. Not only have we not been unfaithful to Thee, but we are actually suffering as martyrs for Thy sake. Such a protest was no doubt particularly true in the persecution of Antiochus, but not in that period only. Cp. the complaints of lxix. 7; Jer. xv. 15.

This verse is quoted by St Paul in Rom. viii. 36, to encourage his converts in view of the possibility that they might have to face even death for Christ's sake. If the saints of old time had to suffer persecution even to the death, they need not be surprised if a like fate should befall them. And the quotation is doubtless intended (as so often) to carry with it the thought of its context, and to remind them of the steadfastness of the Old Testament saints under the sharpest trial of their faith.

23—26. An urgent appeal for immediate help.

23. *Awake...arise*] Bestir thyself, awake. Cp. vii. 6, and many similar invocations. But nowhere else do we find so bold an expostulation as *why sleepest thou?* The nearest parallel is in lxxviii. 65. The Psalmists do not shrink from using human language in reference to

Arise, cast *us* not off for ever.
24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face,
And forgettest our affliction and our oppression?
25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust:
Our belly cleaveth unto the earth.
26 Arise for our help,
And redeem us for thy mercy's sake.

God, though they well knew that the Watchman of Israel was one who neither slumbered nor slept (cxxi. 3, 4).

It is recorded in the Talmud that in the time of the high-priest John Hyrcanus (B.C. 135—107) certain Levites, called 'Awakeners,' daily ascended the pulpit in the Temple and cried, "Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord"? He put a stop to the practice, saying, "Does Deity sleep? Has not the Scripture said, 'Behold he that keepeth Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth?'"

cast us *not off for ever*] Cp. lxxiv. 1; lxxvii. 7; Lam. iii. 31.

24. *hidest thou thy face*] In anger or indifference, instead of shewing the light of Thy countenance in gracious help to Thy people (*v.* 3; lxxx. 3).

our affliction and our oppression] Cp. Deut. xxvi. 7; Ex. iii. 7, 9; 2 Kings xiii. 4; xiv. 26. The latter word occurs elsewhere in the Psalter only in xlii. 9, xliii. 2.

25. We lie utterly prostrate, crushed and helpless. Cp. cxix. 25.

26. *Arise*] R.V., Rise up. Cp. iii. 7; Num. x. 35.

for thy mercy's sake] R.V., for thy lovingkindness sake. Jehovah has revealed Himself to be "a God...plenteous in *lovingkindness* and truth, who keeps *lovingkindness* for thousands" (Ex. xxxiv. 7, 8), and the Psalmist intreats Him to be true to this central attribute of His character. Cp. vi. 4; Mic. vii. 18, 20. On the reading *mercies*', found in many editions, see Scrivener, *Auth. Ed. of the English Bible*, p. 196.

PSALM XLV.

A nuptial ode, celebrating the marriage of a king with a king's daughter. After a brief prelude (1) the Psalmist addresses the king, praising the personal beauty which marks him out as a ruler of men, and bidding him use his strength in the cause of truth and right. Noble qualities of heart and mind fit him for his lofty calling, on which the seal of divine approval has been newly set by the blessing of this supreme happiness, the crowning glory of his state and splendour (2—9). Then turning to the bride he bids her cheerfully accept her new position, and indicates its dignity by pointing to the gifts which allied nations bring in her honour. In magnificent bridal array she is conducted to the royal palace with jubilant rejoicings; and the Psalm concludes with the anticipation of a numerous posterity and undying and worldwide renown for so famous a monarch (10—17).

There is no clearly marked strophical arrangement. The poet passes from thought to thought as his enthusiasm kindles with the grandeur of his theme.

That the Psalm refers to some actual occasion cannot be doubted. Some commentators indeed deny that it has an historical basis, and regard it as wholly prophetic or ideal. The language, they say, far transcends any language that could be used of the best of earthly kings; and from the earliest times, alike in the Jewish and in the Christian Church, it has been understood to refer directly to the Messiah.

A careful study of the Psalm shews that this view is untenable. (1) There is no indication that the Psalmist intends to describe a future personage. (2) The language of the Ps. does not really go beyond what might have been said by a poet of an actual king, viewed in the light of the promises made to the house of David. (3) The Ps. contains realistic details of the circumstances of an Oriental court, which would hardly have been introduced, if it had been originally written as a sacred poem with a mystic meaning.

The view that the Ps. is exclusively Messianic rests in great measure upon an imperfect apprehension of the typical character of the Davidic kingship. The Davidic king was the representative of Jehovah, Who was the true King of Israel, and the poet-seer can boldly greet the reigning monarch in the light of the great prophecies to which he was the heir. Bidding him rise to the height of his calling by the exercise of a just rule which should be a true reflection of the divine government, he can claim for him the fulfilment of the promise of an eternal dominion. It is of the essence of poetry to idealise, and sacred poetry is no exception to the rule. It could disregard the limitations and imperfections of experience, and portray the king in the light of the true and perfect conception of his office, not simply as what he was, but as what he should be. See *Introd.* pp. lxxvi ff.; introd. and notes to Ps. ii; and comp. Riehm's *Messianic Prophecy* (Engl. Tr., ed. 2), pp. 102 ff.

Who then was the king, and what was the occasion referred to? If the lofty language of the Ps. is clearly based upon the Messianic promises and only explicable in connexion with them, some king of the house of David must be its theme. This consideration excludes kings of the Northern Kingdom, such as Ahab, who has been suggested because he possessed an ivory palace (cp. *v.* 8 with 1 Kings xxii. 39) and married a foreign princess (1 Kings xvi. 31); or Jeroboam II, the luxury and splendour of whose reign might seem to correspond to the description in the poem. Still more decisively does it exclude foreign kings, such as some unknown Persian monarch, or Ptolemy Philadelphus, or the Syrian king Alexander (1 Macc. x. 57, 58).

If then the Ps. must refer to some king of Judah, the choice appears to lie between Jehoram and Solomon. (1) Delitzsch finds a suitable occasion in the marriage of Jehoram with Athaliah. Jehoram was the son of the pious Jehoshaphat, whose reign revived the glories of the Solomonic age. Though not actually king when he married Athaliah, he had been raised to the position of co-regent with his father (2 Kings viii. 16). The exhortation to the bride to forget her home, and the

mention of Tyre are supposed to be allusions to the Sidonian origin of Athaliah's mother, Jezebel.

It is however difficult to believe that an inspired poet could have regarded an alliance with the idolatrous house of Ahab with satisfaction, or that in view of the subsequent history such an ode would have been preserved in a collection of temple-hymns. Moreover this bride appears to be a foreign princess, not an Israelite. It remains to adopt the old view that the Psalm celebrates the marriage of Solomon with the daughter of the king of Egypt (1 Kings iii. 1). Such an alliance must have been an event of the highest importance. Solomon's court was a scene of splendour and luxury like that which is described in the Ps. The kingdom was at the zenith of its glory. The promises to David were recent: the hopes which they held out had not yet been dimmed by failure and disappointment. Then as at no other later time it was easy for a poet to idealise the kingship and the kingdom, and to use the language of lofty hope and confident anticipation. Solomon's close alliance with Hiram gives a natural explanation of the mention of Tyre (*v.* 12) as the representative of allied nations. A recent theory regards the Ps. as a 'dramatic lyric,' written after the Return from the exile at a time when the traditional glories of Solomon's reign attracted the attention and exercised the imagination of poets. The theory is improbable, but it recognises the fact that the Ps. may most appropriately be referred to Solomon. The only objections which deserve consideration are that the king is described as a martial hero, whereas Solomon was a man of peace: and that Solomon had no line of royal ancestors such as is supposed to be implied in *v.* 16. (1) To the first of these objections it may be answered that although this king is described as a conquering hero, more stress is laid upon the justice of his rule than upon his warlike exploits. Moreover Solomon was not deficient in military spirit, and though his reign was on the whole peaceful, it was by no means entirely so. He made great military preparations (1 Kings iv. 26; ix. 15 ff.; xi. 27; 2 Chr. viii. 5 ff.), and it is recorded that he conquered Hamath-zobah (2 Chr. viii. 3). It was scarcely possible for a poet to dissociate the idea of a king from the idea of a victorious warrior. (2) As regards the second objection, *v.* 16 does not necessarily imply a long line of royal ancestors. It may be understood as implying the reverse, and expressing the hope that a noble posterity might arise to compensate for the absence of the long ancestry upon which so many oriental monarchs prided themselves.

Whatever may have been the original occasion of the Ps., its Messianic significance has been almost universally recognised. "The marriage-song of the Jewish monarch laid open thoughts which could only be realised in the relation of the Divine King to His Church." The Targum paraphrases *v.* 2; "Thy beauty, O King Messiah, exceeds that of the children of men; a spirit of prophecy is bestowed upon thy lips:" and *v.* 10, "Hear, O congregation of Israel, the law of his mouth, and consider his wondrous works." The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews quotes *vv.* 6, 7 as a description of the moral and eternal sovereignty of Christ (Hebr. i. 8, 9). If the king was typical of Christ, the marriage of the king might symbolise the bridal of Christ and the

Church; and this interpretation was facilitated by the common use of the figure of marriage in the O.T. to describe the relation of Jehovah to His people. The natural relationship is consecrated as the sacrament of the mystical relationship; and the mystical relationship is rendered more comprehensible to the human heart by the sanction of the analogy. Comp. Eph. v. 23 ff.; Apoc. xix. 7 ff.; xxi. 2; xxii. 17.

It may seem strange that an ode thus secular in its origin should find a place in the Canon. But the inclusion of such poems as this and the Song of Songs, with which this Psalm has much in common, helps to place the ordinary relations of human life in a truer light as part of the divine order of the world. And further they are ennobled and consecrated by being thus made the vehicle for lofty thoughts and the type of spiritual mysteries (Eph. v. 23 ff.).

The Psalm is a Proper Psalm for Christmas Day.

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, for the sons of Korah, Maschil, A Song of loves.

My heart is inditing a good matter: 45
I speak of the things which I have made touching *the* king:
My tongue *is* the pen of a ready writer.

The title may be rendered as in R.V., **For the chief Musician: set to Shoshannim; (a Psalm) of the sons of Korah. Maschil, a Song of loves.** *Shoshannim*, that is, *lilies*, denotes not the theme of the Ps., in reference to the beauty and purity of the bride, nor a lily-shaped instrument by which it was to be accompanied, but the melody to which it was to be sung—some well-known song beginning with the word *Shoshannim*. See *Introd.* p. xxvi f., and cp. the titles of lxix, lx, lxxx. The word for *loves*, or *love*, is from the same root as that which forms part of Solomon's original name *Jedidiah=Beloved of Jah* (2 Sam. xii. 25).[1] It is always used of high and noble affection, especially of Jehovah's love for His people (lx. 5; Deut. xxxiii. 12; Is. v. 1).

1. Introduction and dedication.

My heart &c.] Better, **My heart babbleth over with goodly words.** The nobility of his subject inspires him with an impulse which will not be restrained.

I speak of the things &c.] Better, **I speak the things which I have made** (i.e. composed, cp. Old Eng. *maker*=poet) **touching a king.** The absence of the article (*a king*) lays stress upon the dignity rather than upon the personality of the subject of the Ps.; one who is a king and of no lower rank. The punctuation of the Massoretic Text points to a slightly different rendering: *I am about to speak; my work is for* (or, *touching*) *a king.*

the pen of a ready writer] Prompt to express and record the thoughts with which the mind is overflowing. The words rendered *ready writer* are applied to Ezra (vii. 6) the 'ready scribe,' but clearly they do not here bear this technical sense of 'a learned student of the law,' but the literal sense of 'a skilful and rapid penman.'

2 Thou art fairer than the children of men:
Grace is poured into thy lips:
Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.
3 Gird thy sword upon *thy* thigh, O *most* mighty,
With thy glory and thy majesty.
4 And *in* thy majesty ride prosperously

2–9. The royal bridegroom: his personal beauty, the justice of his government, the success of his arms, the glory of his kingdom, the magnificence of his court. He is one upon whom the Divine blessing has rested in fullest measure.

2. *Thou art fairer* &c.] Personal beauty was always regarded as a qualification for a ruler, partly on account of its intrinsic attractiveness, partly as the index of a noble nature. Cp. 1 Sam. ix. 2; x. 23; xvi. 12; and the descriptions of the classical heroes in Homer and Vergil; e.g. Aeneas (*Aen.* i. 589), "os humerosque deo similis."

grace is poured into thy lips] Or, *upon thy lips*. The gracious smile upon his lips gives promise of the gracious words which proceed from them. Cp. Prov. xxii. 11, "He that hath gracious lips, the king shall be his friend"; Eccl. x. 12; Lk. iv. 22.

therefore] This is usually explained to mean, 'Hence it may be seen that God hath blessed thee: it is the logical inference from this endowment of beauty.' But must not *therefore* be understood as in *v.* 7? Physical qualifications correspond to moral qualifications. They are in themselves a Divine gift; but they are further regarded as a ground of the special blessings which have been showered upon the king. The P. B. V. *because* is ungrammatical.

for ever] The perpetuity of the covenant with David and his seed is constantly emphasised. Cp. 2 Sam. vii. 13, 16, 25, 29; Ps. xviii. 50; lxxxix. 2 ff.

3. Instead of praising the king's strength and courage in the abstract the Psalmist bids him use them in the cause of truth and right.

O most *mighty*] O mighty hero.

with *thy glory and thy majesty*] It is better to repeat the verb: (gird on) thy honour and thy majesty. Honour and majesty are Divine attributes, reflected in the person of the victorious King who is Jehovah's representative. Cp. xcvi. 6; civ. 1; cxlv. 5; with xxi. 5.

4. *And* in *thy majesty*] The single word of the original is an exact repetition of the last word of *v.* 3. Such repetitions are a common poetical figure; but the construction is harsh, the prep. *in* not being expressed; the word is omitted by the Syr. (probably) and Jer. (ed. Lagarde); and may be due to an early error of transcription. The consonants are recognised by the LXX, but differently vocalised and rendered, *and bend* [thy bow]. This rendering however involves a doubtful ellipse, and the mention of the bow is hardly in place here.

ride prosperously] Ride on victoriously, on warhorse or in chariot, forcing a way irresistibly through the ranks of the enemy.

Because of truth and meekness *and* righteousness;
And thy right hand shall teach thee terrible *things*.
Thine arrows *are* sharp
In the heart of the king's enemies;
Whereby the people fall under thee.
Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: 6

because of truth] Better, in the cause of truth: in defence and furtherance of virtues which are trampled under foot in evil times and under bad rulers. (Is. lix. 14. 15). Truth and righteousness are the constant attributes of the true king: meekness is the characteristic of the true people of God; and it is the king's work to see that the meek have justice done them. Cp. Is. xi. 1—5; xxix. 19; Zeph. ii. 3; Ps. xxxvii. 11; lxxvi. 9; &c.

shall teach thee] Or, *and let thy right hand teach thee terrible things*, an epithet applied to the marvellous works of God for His people, inspiring them with a holy awe, and their foes with a panic terror (Deut. x. 21; 2 Sam. vii. 23; Is. lxiv. 3; Ps. lxv. 5; cvi. 22; cxlv. 6). By a bold figure the king's *right hand*, i.e. his strength and courage, is said to teach or shew him terrible things, as his success in battle reveals the divine energy with which he has been endowed.

5. As the text stands it must be rendered;

Thine arrows are sharp;
Peoples fall under thee:
(They are) in the heart of the king's enemies.

The poet depicts the battle with rapid vigorous strokes of his pen. The king's arrows are sharpened (Is. v. 28), ready for fatal effect; his enemies fall at their discharge; he rides on over their prostrate corpses; each shaft has found its mark in the heart of a foe. But the construction is abrupt, and possibly there is some error in the text.

6. *Thy throne, O God*, is *for ever and ever*] (1) This appears to be the sense given by all the Ancient Versions, for though it has been argued that ὁ θεὸς in the LXX is not the vocative (*Thy throne O God*) but the predicate (*Thy throne is God*), the words do not appear to have been so understood by any of the ancient commentators, and the construction is certainly not an obvious one. But this rendering involves serious difficulties, whether it is taken as an address to the king or to God. (*a*) Can the king who is the subject of the Ps. be addressed as *Elohim*, 'God'? The older expositors, who regarded the Psalm as directly Messianic, of course felt no difficulty, and saw in the words a recognition of the Deity of Christ. But the tone and contents of the Psalm make it clear that it is addressed to some actual king. Could such a king be so addressed? It is argued that judges were called *gods* (Ex. xxi. 6; xxii. 8, 9, 28(?); 1 Sam. ii. 25); that the theocratic king as the representative of God was said to sit "on the throne of Jehovah" (1 Chr. xxviii. 5; xxix. 23); that a prophet can predict that the house of David should be *as God* (Zech. xii. 8); that *Elohim* is applied to men in the sense of divine or supernatural (Ex. vii. 1; 1 Sam. xxviii. 13); that Isaiah speaks of the Messianic king

as *El gibbôr*, 'mighty God'; and that the words of the next verse (where doubtless *Jehovah thy God* originally stood) preclude the possibility of misunderstanding. But it is doubtful whether judges are actually called *gods* (see R.V. of the passage quoted): certainly they are only so called as the mouthpiece of God. Where is regarded as the fountain of judgement: and after all that has been urged in favour of this interpretation it seems hardly possible to suppose that the king is directly addressed as *Elohim*.

(*b*) The Targum regards the words as addressed to Jehovah, 'The throne of Thy majesty, O Jehovah, abideth for ever and ever.' Jehovah's throne may mean His heavenly throne (xiv. 13; Isa. v. 16), or the throne which He has established on earth as its counterpart and representative. But this interpretation seems to be excluded by the context. The king is addressed in the preceding and following verses, and it seems hardly possible to suppose that in this verse alone Jehovah is abruptly addressed.

(2) In view of these difficulties it is necessary to consider whether the words are correctly translated. Various other renderings have been proposed, taking *Elohim* as the subject or predicate of the clause instead of as a vocative. (*a*) *God is thy throne:* i.e. thy kingdom is founded upon God. In support of this are quoted such phrases as "Jehovah is my refuge and my fortress" (xci. 2), or, "The eternal God is thy dwelling-place" (Deut. xxxiii. 27). But the expression, to say the least, would be a strange one. (*b*) *Thy throne is God*, i.e. divine. But though Hebrew uses substantives as predicates in a way which our idiom does not allow, this particular instance seems scarcely admissible. (*c*) *Thy throne* [is the throne of] *God* (R.V. marg.). It is a disputed point whether this rendering is grammatically legitimate; but good authorities decide in the affirmative. It gives an excellent sense, and if the text is to be retained is the most satisfactory explanation of it. The theocratic king occupied the earthly throne of Jehovah as His representative (1 Chr. xxviii. 5; xxix. 23), ruling by His power (1 Kings iii. 28), and in His Name: and the justice of this king's government (6*b*, 7) stamps him as a worthy representative of Jehovah.

(3) Various emendations have been suggested, for the most part introducing a verb to give the sense, *God hath established thy throne.* The most ingenious is that of Bruston, who supposes that the Elohistic editor misread YIHVH, *Jehovah*, for YIHYH, *shall be*, and according to his usual custom substituted *Elohim*. *Thy throne shall be for ever and ever* would be an echo of the promise in 2 Sam. vii. 16*b*.

Whatever may be the precise rendering, there can be little doubt that the words contain a reference to the promise of eternal dominion to the house of David, which was fulfilled in Christ. See 2 Sam. vii. 13, 16; Ps. lxxxix; cp. xxi. 4; lxxii. 5.

vv. 6, 7 are quoted in Heb. i. 8, 9. "It is commonly supposed that the force of the quotation lies in the Divine title (*ὁ θεός*) which, as it is held, is applied to the Son. It seems however from the whole form of the argument to lie rather in the description which is given of the Son's office and endowment. The angels are subject to constant change, He has a dominion for ever and ever; they work through material powers,

The sceptre of thy kingdom *is* a right sceptre.
Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wicked- 7
ness:
Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee
With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.
All thy garments *smell of* myrrh, and aloes, *and* cassia, 8

He—the Incarnate Son—fulfils a moral sovereignty and is crowned with unique joy. Nor could the reader forget the later teaching of the Psalm on the Royal Bride and the Royal Race. In whatever way then *ὁ θεός* be taken, the quotation establishes the conclusion which the writer wishes to draw as to the essential difference of the Son and the angels." Bp. Westcott *in loc.*

the sceptre &c.] R.V. rightly, **A sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy kingdom.** The sceptre is the symbol of royal authority; and the authority of the true king, like that of Jehovah, is exercised in righteousness and equity. Cp. lxvii. 4; lxxxix. 14 with Is. ix. 7; xi. 4 ff; Ps. lxxii. 2 ff, 12 ff, and numerous passages in which righteousness is named as a fundamental attribute of God and an indispensable characteristic of His true representative on earth.

7. *Thou lovest* &c.] Or, as R.V., **Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness.** "I have loved justice and hated iniquity, and therefore I die in exile" were the last memorable words of Gregory VII. Milman, *Hist. of Lat. Christianity*, iv. 138.

therefore] The willing conformity of the king to the will of God is rewarded with special tokens of His favour.

God, thy God] The rendering, *O God, thy God* is unquestionably wrong. *God, thy God* in the Elohistic Psalms is the equivalent of *Jehovah thy God* elsewhere. Cp. xliii. 4; l. 7.

hath anointed thee &c.] The reference is not to anointing as the symbol of consecration to the office of king, but to the use of oil on occasions of festivity (xxiii. 5; civ. 15). Thus 'the oil of gladness' is contrasted with mourning (Is. lxi. 3: cp. 2 Sam. xii. 20; xiv. 2). The rejoicings of the marriage festival are meant. Cp. Cant. iii. 11.

thy fellows] Other kings, to none of whom has equal happiness been granted. Cp. lxxxix. 27 *b*.

8. The bridegroom appears, arrayed for the marriage, his garments saturated with costly perfumes, brought from distant lands. *Myrrh* was a product of Arabia: *aloes* here denotes the perfumed wood of an Indian tree: *cassia* (a different word from that so translated in Ex. xxx. 24; Ezek. xxvii. 19, and found here only) was either a species of cinnamon, or the *koost* of India. Indian orris or *costus*. Myrrh and aloes are mentioned together in Cant. iv. 14 among chief spices.

Prof. Earle notes that "these English spice-names are all identical with the words in the Hebrew; for with these oriental spices their oriental names travelled westward, and they became through Greek and Latin the common property of the European languages." *Psalter of* 1539, p. 285.

Out of the ivory palaces, *whereby* they have made thee glad.
9 Kings' daughters *were* among thy honourable *women*:
Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.
10 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear;
Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;

out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad] An impossible rendering. Translate with R.V., **out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made thee glad**. Music greets the bridegroom as he enters the palace. Palaces ornamented with ivory, probably inlaid in panels, are mentioned in 1 Kings xxii. 39; Am. iii. 15. Cp. 1 Kings x. 18, 22; Cant. v. 14; vii. 4; Am. vi. 4; Ezek. xxvii. 6, 15. Homer (*Od.* IV. 72) speaks of

Echoing halls
Of gold, electron, silver, ivory,

in the palace of Menelaus. Vergil (*Aen.* X. 135 ff.) and Horace (*Odes* II. 18. 2) mention the use of ivory for inlaying.

9. **Kings' daughters are among thy honourable women:**
At thy right hand doth stand the queen in gold of Ophir (R.V.).

An Oriental monarch prided himself on the number and nobility of the wives in his harem, and some at least of the Jewish monarchs were no exception to the rule (1 Kings xi. 3; Cant. vi. 8). It may seem strange that such a degradation of the true ideal of marriage should find place in a Psalm which opens up such lofty thoughts and hopes. But the Psalm reflects the actual facts and customs of the age: it is not intended to depict a perfect state of things. One of the wives takes precedence of the rest and occupies the place of honour (1 Kings ii. 19) at the king's right hand. It is implied that this place is reserved for the new bride whom the poet now turns to address. The verse is a general description of the king's state, for the bride has not yet been brought in (*v.* 14); or is the poet anticipating? Gold of Ophir was the choicest gold (1 Kings ix. 28: x. 11; Job xxii. 24; xxviii. 16), but where Ophir was is not known. Most probably it was in S. Arabia or India.

10–12. The poet addresses the bride, counselling her to forget her old home and surrender herself with complete devotion to her husband, and describing the honours which await her.

10. *Hearken, O daughter*] The Psalmist adopts the tone of an authoritative teacher and uses language resembling that of the Wise Man to his disciples in the opening chapter of Proverbs (i. 8, and frequently). The exhortation seems strange until it is remembered that the marriage was probably a matter of state policy, and that the bride would not even have seen her future husband.

forget &c.] Cast no lingering looks of regret behind, but adapt thyself to the new home and new conditions. Perhaps, as the Targ. suggests, there may be a special reference to religious beliefs and customs. It has been thought that Pharaoh's daughter embraced

So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: 11
For he *is* thy Lord; and worship thou him.
And the daughter of Tyre *shall be there* with a gift; 12
Even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour.
The king's daughter *is* all glorious within: 13
Her clothing *is* of wrought gold.
She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle- 14
work:

Judaism, as Egyptian deities are not mentioned among those for which Solomon made high places. See Lumby on 1 Kings iii. 1.

11. *So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty*] Omit *greatly*.

worship thou him] Better, **do him homage**: not necessarily in the literal sense of prostrating herself before him (1 Sam. xxv. 41; 1 Kings i. 16, 31), but by shewing him befitting respect and submission. This exhortation, and the title *lord* for husband (cp. Gen. xviii. 12) reflect the subordinate position of women in ancient times and Oriental countries. Yet see also 1 Pet. iii. 5, 6. The rendering of P.B.V., *for he is thy Lord God*, follows the Vulg. But *God* is not in the LXX, and was no doubt a gloss in accordance with the Messianic interpretation.

12. The words *shall be there* are not in the Heb., and it has been proposed to render, *And, O daughter of Tyre, with a gift shall the rich of the people intreat thy favour*, making the bride a Tyrian princess. But apart from other objections, *the daughter of Tyre* should mean, according to the analogy of the similar phrases, *daughter of Zion*, *daughter of Babylon*, not an individual Tyrian woman, but the city and people of Tyre personified as a woman: and the A.V. no doubt gives the sense correctly, though some verb has probably been lost. The express mention of the wealthy merchant city of Tyre as the representative of the neighbouring nations which would send their greetings to the new queen is most naturally accounted for if the Psalm refers to Solomon, who was in close alliance with Tyre.

even *the rich* &c.] Render, **Yea, the richest of people**: i.e. as the LXX paraphrases, *the people of the earth*; or perhaps, *of the land*: wealthy nobles of the country as well as foreigners.

13—15. Description of the bride adorned for her husband.

13. **The king's daughter within (the palace) is all glorious:**
Her clothing is inwrought with gold. (R.V.)

The bride is described in all the splendour of her bridal attire. **Within** the palace, or **in the inner part** of the palace, may refer to her old home, the Psalmist by poetical licence ignoring intervals of time and place; but, more probably, to the house in Jerusalem to which she had been brought, and from which she is now to be conducted in state to the king's palace (*vv.* 14, 15).

14. **In raiment of embroidery shall she be conducted to the king,** in solemn and stately procession, accompanied by a train of attendants such as befits a king's daughter. Cp. Esth. ii. 9. For mention of

The virgins her companions that follow her *shall be* brought
unto thee.
15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought:
They shall enter into the king's palace.
16 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children,
Whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.
17 I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations:
Therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

embroidery cp. Ex. xxviii. 39; Judg. v. 30; &c. Other but less probable renderings are *on tapestry or carpets of divers colours*, or, *on tapestry-curtained chambers*.

15. *shall they be brought*] Shall they be conducted, as in *v.* 14. The procession which conducted the bride to her new home was an important part of the marriage ceremony, and was always accompanied with songs and music and dancing as the early part of rejoicing. See 1 Macc. ix. 37 ff. "The children of Jambri made a great marriage, and were bringing the bride from Nadabath with a great company, marching as she was the daughter of one of the great nobles of Canaan.... And there was much ado, and a great train of baggage: and the bridegroom came forth with his friends and his brethren to meet them, with drums and instruments of music and many weapons."

16, 17. Concluding wishes and anticipations addressed to the king.

16. *Instead of thy fathers* &c.] The wish does not, as is sometimes said, imply a long line of royal ancestors, and therefore exclude the reference of the Psalm to Solomon, but rather the reverse. If he cannot boast of a long ancestry, may he at least be famous for a numerous and distinguished posterity.

whom thou mayest &c.] Better, whom thou shalt make princes in all the earth (R.V.). We might render in all the land, and compare Solomon's governors (1 Kings iv. 7 ff.), and the 'princes of the provinces' in the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings xx. 14, 15), and Rehoboam's settlement of his sons in different fortified cities (2 Chron. xi. 23). But the reference to subject and allied peoples (*vv.* 5, 17) makes it probable that *in all the earth* is right. Cp. ii. 8; lxxii. 8 ff.

17. The poet's song will perpetuate the memory of the king: and that not in Israel only, but among other peoples (lxxii. 17).

therefore shall the people praise thee] Therefore shall the peoples praise thee, or (R.V.) give thee thanks: a word commonly applied to God (xlii. 5, 11; xliii. 4, 5; and often), rarely to men (Gen. xlix. 8; Ps. xlix. 18). Solomon's name is remembered while the names of monarchs far more powerful from a worldly point of view have been forgotten, because God had made him His representative and the head of His visible kingdom upon earth, the type of His perfect representative who should come to establish His universal kingdom among men.

PSALM XLVI.

Psalms xlvi. xlvii. xlviii. are closely connected. They form a trilogy of praise, in which some signal deliverance of Jerusalem from foreign enemies is celebrated. In Ps. xlvi the leading idea is the Presence of Jehovah in the midst of His city and people as the ground of their confidence: in Ps. xlvii it is the universal Sovereignty of Jehovah as the King of all the earth, of which the recent defeat of Zion's enemies is an illustration: in Ps. xlviii it is the Safety of Zion, the result and the proof of God's presence in her midst.

These Psalms cannot be merely general expressions of confidence in Jehovah as the protector of Zion. They plainly owe their origin to some definite historical event. The Psalmist writes as the representative of those who have recently passed through some terrible crisis of anxiety, who have seen with their own eyes a signal manifestation of God's power on behalf of His people, comparable to His mighty works of old time, and who have recognised in the course of events the proof not only of Jehovah's love for His own people but of His universal sovereignty.

The miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem from the army of Sennacherib in the reign of Hezekiah (B.C. 721) may be assigned as the occasion of these Psalms, with a probability which approaches certainty.

Hezekiah had asserted his independence of Assyria, and Sennacherib had come to chastise his rebellious vassal. The exact course of events is obscure, but it appears that Sennacherib after ravaging Judah compelled Hezekiah to make a humble submission and pay a heavy indemnity, without however requiring the surrender of Jerusalem (2 Kings xviii. 13—16). But reflection quickly convinced him that it would be imprudent to leave behind him such a strong fortress as Jerusalem in the hands of a vassal of such doubtful loyalty as Hezekiah, while he marched on into Egypt, and therefore while he was besieging Lachish with the main body of his army, he sent a force under the command of his chief officers, the Tartan and the Rabsaris and the Rabshakeh, to demand the surrender of Jerusalem. It was an anxious moment. A refusal seemed certain to ensure condign chastisement when Sennacherib returned victorious from his Egyptian campaign. Jerusalem would share the fate which had befallen Samaria twenty-one years before. But relying upon Jehovah's promise to defend His city, communicated through the prophet Isaiah, Hezekiah refused the demand, and Sennacherib's envoys returned to their master, who was now besieging Libnah. Gladly no doubt he would have inflicted a summary vengeance on his defiant vassal. But Tirhakah's army was already on the march, and all that Sennacherib could do was to threaten. His letter to Hezekiah was a contemptuous denial of Jehovah's power to defend Jerusalem. Hezekiah took it to the Temple, and "spread it before Jehovah," appealing to Him to confute these blasphemies, and vindicate His claim to be the living God. Then it was that Isaiah uttered that sublime prophecy in which he declared that Sennacherib's

pride was doomed to be humbled, and that Jerusalem would be preserved inviolate.

And so it came to pass. A sudden and mysterious visitation destroyed Sennacherib's army. Unable to face Tirhakah, he returned to Assyria, leaving Jerusalem unharmed.

A deliverance so marvellous, so strikingly verifying Isaiah's prophecy, and so visibly demonstrating the will and power of Jehovah to defend His people, could not fail to make a deep impression, and must have evoked the most heartfelt expressions of thanksgiving and praise (cp. Is. xxx. 29). And when we mark the numerous coincidences of thought and language between these Psalms and the prophecies of Isaiah, we can scarcely doubt that some of the noblest of these thanksgivings have been preserved to us in these Psalms.

Details will be found in the notes: here it may be sufficient to call attention to some of the broader features of resemblance. The leading thought of Ps. xlvi, expressed in the refrain (vv. 7, 11), is the echo of Isaiah's great watchword Immanuel (Is. vii. 14; viii. 8, 10: cp. Mic. iii. 11). The truth of the universal sovereignty of Jehovah, the assurance that God 'our King' is the King of all the earth, which is the prominent idea of Ps. xlvii (cp. xlviii. 2), is implicitly contained, if not so explicitly expressed, in the teaching of Isaiah (vi. 5; xxxvii. 22 ff.). The inviolability of Zion, the dwelling-place of Jehovah, which is the theme of Ps. xlviii, is a fundamental principle of Isaiah's message in the reign of Hezekiah (xxix. 3 ff.; xxxi. 5; &c.).

Proof is of course impossible, but these Psalms will gain vastly in vividness and reality if they are studied in close connexion with the prophecies of Isaiah, as the expression of the gratitude and the hopes which animated the noblest spirits in Jerusalem at that critical moment of the nation's history. If not written by Isaiah himself, as some commentators have thought, they must at least have been written by one of Isaiah's disciples who was deeply penetrated with the spirit and language of his master's prophecies.

Pss. lxxv, lxxvi in the Asaphite collection probably refer to the same event, and should be compared.

A brief mention of two rival theories is all that is necessary. (1) Delitzsch adopts the view that the occasion of these Psalms was the discomfiture of the confederate forces of the Moabites Ammonites and Edomites, who invaded Judah in the reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Chr. xx). Jahaziel, an Asaphite Levite, foretold their defeat. The army marched out with Korahite singers at its head. The arms of the invaders were turned against one another, and in the neighbourhood of Tekoa their forces were annihilated. The victory was celebrated first in the valley of Beracah, and then by a triumphal thanksgiving procession to the Temple. A deep impression was produced upon surrounding nations by the report of the victory. This view however is improbable, for (*a*) upon that occasion Jerusalem was not directly threatened, and (*b*) it fails to account for the connexion of the Psalms with Isaiah's prophecies. That the prophet is copying the Psalmist is unlikely.

(2) Others have found an appropriate occasion in the attack of the confederate forces of Pekah and Rezin upon Judah in the reign of Ahaz,

mainly on the ground of resemblances to Isaiah's prophecies of that period. But inasmuch as Ahaz had refused to trust Jehovah and faithlessly appealed to Assyria for help, the retreat of the invaders can have been no occasion for thanksgivings like these Psalms, which ascribe Judah's deliverance wholly to the goodness of Jehovah.

Ps. xlvi consists of three equal stanzas, each followed by a *Selah*. The second and third end with a refrain (*vv.* 7, 11), which may perhaps have originally stood at the close of the first also. Comp. Pss. xlii. xliii. In the first stanza the primary truth that God is the refuge of His people is presented as the truest ground for fearless confidence (1—3): the second refers to the specific illustration of this truth exhibited in the recent deliverance of Zion (4—7): the third treats this manifestation of Jehovah's power as the earnest and pledge of His final supremacy over all the nations (8—11).

Luther's famous hymn, *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*, "the battle-song of the Reformation," is based upon this Psalm. See Winkworth's *Christian Singers of Germany*, p. 110.

To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, A Song upon Alamoth.

46 God *is* our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, 2
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

The title should be rendered as in R.V., **For the Chief Musician; (a Psalm) of the sons of Korah; set to Alamoth. A song.** *Alāmōth* means *damsels* (lxviii. 25), and the phrase *set to Alāmōth*, which is applied in 1 Chr. xv. 20 to instruments, probably denotes that the music of the Ps. was intended for women's voices (cp. lxviii. 11, note). The Ancient Versions were entirely at fault as to the meaning. The LXX renders *ὑπὲρ τῶν κρυφίων*, 'concerning secret things,' Vulg. *pro occultis*: Symm. *ὑπὲρ τῶν αἰωνίων*, 'concerning eternal things': Aq. *ἐπὶ νεανιοτήτων*, and similarly Jer., *pro iuventutibus*, 'for youth.'

1—3. Secure under His protection God's people have nothing to fear, even though the solid earth were convulsed, and rent asunder.

1. The prayer of Is. xxxiii. 2, "Be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble," has been answered. In the extremity of their distress, God has proved Himself the refuge and strength of His people. He has verified the prophecies of Isaiah, who bade them trust in Him alone, and denounced the popular policy of an alliance with Egypt as "a refuge of lies." Cp. Is. xxviii. 15, 17; xxx. 2.

a very present help in trouble] Lit., *a help in distresses hath he let himself be found exceedingly*. The words are not merely a general statement, but an appeal to recent experience. For 'let himself be found' cp. 2 Chr. xv. 2, 4, 15; Jer. xxix. 14.

2. **Therefore will we not fear, though earth should change,**
And the mountains be moved into the heart of the seas.

3 *Though* the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

4 *There is* a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God,
The holy *place* of the tabernacles of the most High.

Cp. Horace's description of the dauntless soul of the just man (*Odes* III. 3. 7),

Si fractus illabatur orbis,
Impavidum ferient ruinae.

The words are to be understood literally (Is. liv. 10), and not metaphorically, as "a vivid sketch of utter confusion, dashed in with three or four bold strokes, an impossible case supposed in order to bring out the unshaken calm of those who have God for ark in such a deluge" (Maclaren). At the same time they suggest the thought of the upheaval and commotion of the nations, and (*v.* 3) the flood of invasion beating against mount Zion and threatening to overwhelm it. Cp. *v.* 6; Is. xvii. 12, 13.

3. As the text stands this verse must be treated, as in the A.V. and R.V., as a continuation of *v.* 2. But the symmetrical structure of the Ps., resembling that of Pss. xlii—xliii, makes it probable that the refrain (*vv.* 7, 11) has been lost. If it is restored, we may render:

Let the waters thereof rage and foam!
Let the mountains quake at the proud swelling thereof!
Jehovah of hosts is with us,
The God of Jacob is our high fortress.

Be all around us never so threatening, we are secure in the presence and protection of Jehovah. For the 'proud swelling' of the sea cp. lxxxix. 9.

4—7. The Presence of God the joy and security of His people.

4. In contrast to the tumultuous sea threatening to engulf the solid mountain is the river, *the streams whereof* make glad *the city of God*. The gently flowing river, fertilising all the land over which it is distributed in channels and rivulets, is an emblem of Jehovah's Presence, blessing and gladdening His city. Abundant irrigation is indispensable in Palestine. Cp. i. 3; Is. xxx. 25. The figure reminds us of Is. viii. 6, where "the waters of Shiloah that go softly" are the emblem of the Divine government, and "the waters of the River great and many" are the emblem of the power of Assyria; and again of Is. xxxiii. 21, where Jehovah is compared to a mighty river encircling and protecting His city.

the city of God] Cp. xlviii. 1, 8; lxxxvii. 3; ci. 8; Is. ix. 14; Heb. xii. 22; Rev. iii. 12.

the holy place &c.] Better, **the holy dwelling place of the Most High**. Cp. xliii. 3, note. The title *Most High* is significant. By His deliverance of His own city He has proved Himself the supreme Ruler

God *is* in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: 5
God shall help her, *and that* right early.
The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: 6
He uttered his voice, the earth melted.
The LORD of hosts *is* with us; 7
The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah.

of the world, refuting the self-deifying pretensions of Sennacherib (Is. xxxvi. 20; xxxvii. 4, 10 ff., 23, 35; cp. xiv. 13, 14). Cp. Ps. vii. 17, and for the usage of this title see Appendix, Note ii.

5. *God* is *in the midst of her*] Cp. Is. xii. 6; and Mic. iii. 11, where we learn how this watchword was abused by those who saw in the Presence of God a pledge of protection but no call to holiness.

she shall not be moved] More stable than the solid mountains (*v.* 2): more secure than the kingdoms of the earth (*v.* 6).

and that *right early*] Better, when the morn appeareth, when the dawn of deliverance succeeds the night of distress (v. 3; xxx. 5): but not without a special reference to the morning when they rose to find Sennacherib's army destroyed (Is. xxxvii. 36), and a reminiscence of the Exodus, where the same phrase is used (Ex. xiv. 27).

6. *The heathen raged*] Or, the nations roared;—a word commonly used of the tumultuous noise of a multitude or an army (lxxxiii. 2; Is. xvii. 12). The same words (*roared...were moved*), which were used in *vv.* 2, 3 of convulsions of the earth, are applied to commotions among the nations; but the change of tense shews that while *vv.* 2, 3 are hypothetical, *v.* 6 refers to an actual experience.

he uttered his voice] God has but to speak with His voice of thunder, and earth melts in terror: its inhabitants with all their proud Titanic boastings are dissolved. Cp. Is. xxix. 6; xxx. 30 f; Ex. xv. 15; Am. ix. 5; Ps. lxxv. 3; lxxvi. 8. The rhythm of short abrupt clauses without a conjunction recalls that of Ex. xv. 9, 10.

7. The refrain corresponds to Isaiah's watchword *Immanuel*, 'God is with us' (Is. vii. 14; viii. 8, 10). The name *Jehovah* is retained (or has been restored) here even in the Elohistic collection in the familiar title *Jehovah of hosts*. This great title *Jehovah Tsebāōth* or 'LORD of hosts' was characteristic of the regal and prophetic period. Originally it may have designated Jehovah as "the God of the armies of Israel" (1 Sam. xvii. 45), Who went forth with His people's hosts to battle (xliv. 9; lx. 10). But as the phrase "host of heaven" was used for the celestial bodies (Gen. ii. 1), and celestial beings (1 Kings xxii. 19), the meaning of the title was extended to designate Jehovah as the ruler of the heavenly powers, the supreme Sovereign of the universe. Hence one of the renderings of it in the LXX is *Κύριος παντοκράτωρ*, *Lord Almighty*, or rather, *Lord All-Sovereign*. See add. note on 1 Sam., p. 235. The title is a favourite one with Isaiah, and its use here is significant. He whose command all the hosts of heaven obey is Israel's ally. Cp. 2 Kings vi. 16 ff.

the God of Jacob] A title suggesting the thought of Jehovah's provi

8 Come, behold the works of the LORD,
What desolations he hath made in the earth.
9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;
He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;
He burneth the chariot in the fire.
10 Be still, and know that I *am* God:
I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.
11 The LORD of hosts *is* with us;
The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah.

dential care for the great ancestor of the nation, a thought upon which Hosea dwells (xii. 2 ff.).

our refuge] Or, *our high fortress:* the same word as that in ix. 9; xviii. 2; xlviii. 3; Is. xxxiii. 16. Cp. the use of the cognate verb in xx. 1, "The Name of the God of Jacob set thee up on high."

8—11. An exhortation to reflect upon this marvellous deliverance and learn its lesson.

8. *Come, behold*] The invitation is addressed to all (Is. xxxiii. 13), but especially to the nations, who are bidden (v. 10) to take warning from the sight. They are not merely to "see the works of Jehovah" (lxvi. 5), but to *behold* them; to gaze upon them with discerning insight.

the LORD] Some MSS. read *God*; but LXX., Targ., Jer., support the text. The name *Jehovah* may have been retained as significant in relation to foreign enemies.

what desolations &c.] Rather, **who hath set desolations**, or, **astonishments**. It is possible, as Lagarde thought, that the LXX represents another reading, *wonders* (Jer. xxxii. 20).

9. The destruction of the Assyrians is an earnest of that final abolition of war which Jehovah will one day bring about, destroying the weapons of war, or burning them in a vast pyre upon the battlefield, as Isaiah predicted (ix. 5, R.V.). Cp. Is. ii. 4 (= Mic. iv. 3); Zech. ix. 10.

the chariot] R.V. **the chariots**. The word however is nowhere used of war chariots, and must rather mean *baggage-wagons* (cp. 1 Sam. xvii. 20; xxvi. 7). Perhaps, as Baethgen proposes, the word should be vocalised *'agilōth* instead of *'agaloth*, and rendered as in LXX and Targ., *shields*.

10. Jehovah speaks, admonishing the nations to desist from their vain endeavour to destroy His people, and bidding them recognise Him as the true God, who will manifest His absolute supremacy. Cp. Is. xxxiii. 10; Ex. xiv. 4, 17, 18; Ps. ii. 10.

11. The refrain with its triumphant chorus of faith and gratitude forms an appropriate conclusion.

PSALM XLVII.

This Psalm is an expansion of the thought of Ps. xlvi. 10. Zion's King is the true 'great King' (xlviii. 2), the King of all the earth. All nations are summoned to pay homage to the God who has proclaimed and proved His supremacy by His recent triumph over the heathen. The occasion of the Psalm was probably the same as that of Pss. xlvi and xlviii, though the allusions to the circumstances are less definite, and the resemblances to the prophecies of Isaiah are less marked than in those Psalms. But it celebrates a recent victory, after which God, who had 'come down' to fight for His people (Is. xxxi. 4), had 'ascended up' in triumph to heaven (*v.* 5). The discomfiture of Sennacherib was precisely such a triumph; a lesson, as Isaiah repeatedly implies, to the nations not less than to Judah, of Jehovah's supreme sovereignty.

The similarity of the Psalm to Pss. xciii, xcvi—xcix, has led many commentators to connect it with the Return from Exile. There seems however to be scarcely sufficient reason for separating it from the Psalms between which it stands, and with both of which it has links of connexion.

It is rightly regarded as a Messianic Psalm, inasmuch as it looks forward to the submission of all the nations of the world to Jehovah as their King; and it has naturally, on account of *v.* 5, been used from ancient times as a special Psalm for Ascension Day. Not that *v.* 5 is a prophecy of the Ascension; the context makes it plain that it cannot be so regarded. But the words originally spoken of Jehovah's return to His throne in heaven (as we speak) after His triumph over the deadly enemies of His people, may be legitimately applied to the return of Christ to heaven after His triumph over sin and death, to take His seat upon His throne of glory at the right hand of God.

It is the New Year's Day Psalm of the Synagogue, recited seven times previous to the blowing of the Trumpets, which marked that festival (Num. xxix. 1).

The Psalm consists of three stanzas:

i. An universal summons to praise Jehovah, the King of all the earth, who has chosen Israel to be His people (1—4).

ii. A repeated summons to sing His praises, in view of the recent manifestation of His sovereignty (5—7).

iii. The ultimate realisation of that sovereignty in the homage of the princes of the nations (8, 9).

To the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

O clap *your* hands, all ye people; 47

1—4. A summons to all nations to acknowledge Jehovah as their King. He has proved His sovereignty by subjecting the nations to His own people and assigning to it the choicest land for its inheritance.

1. *all ye people*] Render **all ye peoples**, here and in *vv.* 3, 9*a*. It is the nations of the world who are addressed. They are summoned to salute Jehovah, as a new king was saluted on his accession, with clapping

Shout unto God with the voice of triumph.
2 For the LORD most High *is* terrible;
He is a great King over all the earth.
3 He shall subdue the people under us,
And the nations under our feet.
4 He shall choose our inheritance for us,
The excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.

of hands (2 Kings xi. 12) and shouting (1 Sam. x. 24). Cp. Num. xxiii. 21, where "the shout of a king" means the shout with which Israel celebrates the Presence of Jehovah in its midst as a victorious king.

triumph] The cognate verb is used in xx. 5 of the joyous shouting which welcomes the victorious king.

2. We may also render as in R.V. marg.,

For the LORD is most high (and) terrible,

or better still,

For Jehovah, the Most High, the terrible,
Is a great King over all the earth,

for the universal sovereignty of Jehovah is the prominent thought of the Psalm. He is not merely King of Israel (*v.* 6) but King of all the earth (*v.* 7). It is to Him that the title 'great King,' so arrogantly assumed by the king of Assyria (Is. xxxvi. 4), really belongs. This verse links together xlvi. 4 and xlviii. 2. For the epithet 'terrible' cp. lxxvi. 7, 12; Ex. xv. 11; Deut. vii. 21; x. 17.

3, 4. It is difficult to decide what is the exact force of the tenses in these verses. The most probable rendering (see Driver's *Tenses*, §§ 83 f., 173) appears to be either (1), **He subdued the peoples under us**...**He chose our inheritance for us**; referring to the settlement of Israel in Canaan as a proof of the universal sovereignty of Jehovah (Deut. xxxii. 8; Ex. xix. 5): or (2), **He hath subdued**...**hath chosen**; referring to the recent triumph by which He had once more driven out the enemies of His people from the land, and proved that He had chosen it for their inheritance. The first explanation is preferable, for the second requires a somewhat forced sense to be given to *hath chosen*, which can hardly be justified even by Is. xiv. 1, Zech. i. 17. Less satisfactory are the renderings *subdueth*.. *chooseth* (R.V. marg.), expressing a general truth, though not perhaps without reference to its illustration by recent events: and *shall subdue*...*shall choose*, or *may he subdue*...*may he choose*.

3*a* appears to be a reminiscence of xviii. 47.

our inheritance] The common word for Canaan as the possession destined for Jehovah's firstborn son Israel (Ex. xv. 17; Deut. iv. 21, 38; Jer. iii. 19; &c.).

the excellency] Better, **the pride of J.**, the land on which Israel prided itself. So the Temple is called "the pride of your power," Ezek. xxiv. 21.

whom he loved] Jehovah's love, not Israel's merit, was the ground of the choice. Cp. Deut. iv. 37; Mal. i. 2. R.V. marg. *loveth* is a less suitable rendering.

God is gone up with a shout,
The LORD with the sound of a trumpet.
Sing *praises* to God, sing *praises:*
Sing *praises* unto our King, sing *praises.*
For God *is* the King of all the earth:
Sing ye *praises* with understanding.
God reigneth over the heathen:
God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.
The princes of the people are gathered together,

5—7. A renewed summons to celebrate Jehovah's sovereignty.

5. *God is gone up*] He must therefore have previously 'come down.' God is said to 'come down' when He manifests His presence by active interposition in the affairs of the world. (Gen. xi. 5, 7; Is. xxxi. 4; lxiv. 1, 3). He is said to 'go up,' when, His work over, He as it were returns to heaven (lxviii. 18). The triumphal procession, carrying up (at least in ancient times) the Ark which was the symbol of God's presence to the Temple which was the symbol of heaven, and celebrating the victory which He had won for them with shouts and blowing of trumpets, was the outward and visible emblem of this 'ascension,' and suggests the form of the expression here. Cp. 2 Sam. vi. 15.

6. *Sing* praises] The verb from which *mizmōr*, 'a psalm,' is derived. See Introd. p. xix.

7. *with understanding*] So the LXX, Vulg., and Jer. But better as R.V. marg., **in a skilful psalm**, Heb. *Maschil.* See *Introd.* p. xix.

8, 9. The final realisation of Jehovah's sovereignty over the world.

8. God hath proclaimed himself king over the nations,
God hath taken his seat upon his holy throne.

The verbs express not merely a fact but an act. God was King, but He has given fresh proof of it. He has caused Himself to be acknowledged King, and taken His seat upon His throne to judge and rule (ciii. 19). Cp. Rev. xi. 15.

9. In the spirit of prophecy the Psalmist beholds the realisation of the hope expressed in *v.* 1. The nations acknowledge Jehovah's sovereignty. Cp. cii. 22. As the representatives of the nations which they rule, *the princes of the peoples are gathered together* to Jerusalem to pay homage to Jehovah. The Massoretic text of the next line must be rendered with R.V., 'To be *the people of the God of Abraham':* a bold phrase, reaching the very climax of Messianic hope, and hardly paralleled elsewhere. For though the nations are frequently spoken of as attaching themselves to Israel in the worship of Jehovah (Is. ii. 2 ff; xi. 10; lvi. 6 ff.; lx. 3 ff.; Zech. viii. 20 ff.; &c. &c.), they are not called "the people of God." This title is reserved for Israel, and only in the N.T. are the promises made to Israel extended to the Gentiles (Rom. ix. 25). Yet see Is. xix. 25, where Egypt receives the title 'my people.' The rendering of R.V. marg. 'Unto *the people*,' is scarcely legitimate. It is

Even the people of the God of Abraham:
For the shields of the earth *belong* unto God:
He is greatly exalted.

however to be noted that the consonants of the word *'am* 'people' are identical with those of *'im*, 'with,' and the LXX read them as the preposition (*with the God of A.*). It is a natural conjecture that we should restore the preposition and render;

The princes of the peoples are gathered together,
Along with the people of the God of Abraham.

the God of Abraham] The title recalls the promises of blessing to the nations made through Abraham (Gen. xii. 2 f. &c.).

the shields of the earth] Princes are so called, as the protectors of their people. Jehovah is their overlord, and they come to acknowledge their dependence. The title *shield* is often applied to God, and sometimes to the kings and princes of Israel (Hos. iv. 18; Ps. lxxxix. 18).

he is greatly exalted] Cp. xcvii. 9; and, though the Heb. word is different, xlvi. 10.

PSALM XLVIII.

In the crisis of her uttermost peril Jehovah has proved Himself the protector of Zion (1—8): and the citizens of the rescued city are bidden to deepen their sense of His mercy by reflecting on the marvellousness of the deliverance vouchsafed to them (9—14). The Ps. is the companion and counterpart to Ps. xlvi. There the Presence of God in the midst of Zion as the guarantee of her safety, here the safety of Zion which is the result of that Presence, is the leading idea. Reasons have already been given for believing that the Psalm celebrates the escape of Jerusalem from Sennacherib's threatened vengeance. It is the work of an eyewitness of the deliverance: it appeals to those who knew from what imminent peril they had been saved. The parallels with Isaiah's prophecies of the time, especially with ch. xxxiii, written partly before (1—12), partly after (13—24) the destruction of Sennacherib's host, should be carefully studied.

This Ps. is appointed as a proper Ps. for Whitsunday. Zion is the type of the Christian Church, and the Ps. which celebrates the glory of Zion and her safety under the care of her Divine protector is an appropriate Psalm for the festival which is the birthday of the Church.

A Song *and* Psalm for the sons of Korah.

48 Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised

Title. **A Song; a Psalm of the Sons of Korah** (R.V.). *A Song* is the general term: *a Psalm* further defines it as intended for instrumental accompaniment. See *Introd.* p. xix f. The LXX adds, "for the second day of the week," and we know from the Mishnah that the Psalm was

In the city of our God, *in* the mountain of his holiness.
Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, *is* mount Zion,
On the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

recited on that day by the Levites in the Temple Services. See *Introd.* p. xxvii.

1, 2. The theme of the Psalm: the greatness of Jehovah and the glory of His city.

1. *greatly to be praised*] The R.V. returns to Coverdale's rendering (P.B.V.), highly to be praised. The same emphatic adverb occurs in each of the two preceding Pss. God has proved Himself to be an *exceedingly* present help in trouble (xlvi. 1); by His triumph over the nations He is *exceedingly* exalted (xlvii. 9); and therefore He is *exceedingly* worthy to be praised. Jehovah is the one object of Israel's praise (Deut. x. 21): Israel's praises are as it were the throne upon which He sits (Ps. xxii. 3): the keynote of worship is *Hallelujah*, 'praise ye Jah'; and the Hebrew title of the Psalter is *Tehillim*, i.e. *Praises*. *v.* 1 *a* recurs in xcvi. 4 *a*, cxlv. 3 *a*.

in the city of our God] Cp. *v.* 8; xlvi. 4, note.

in *the mountain of his holiness*] R.V., in his holy mountain; i.e. Zion, which here and throughout the Psalm (*vv.* 2, 11, 12) denotes the whole city, not merely one of the hills on which it was built. Cp. ii. 6, note. For another possible translation see note on *v.* 2.

2. *Beautiful for situation*] Rather, as R.V., beautiful in elevation. Cp. l. 2. "Its elevation," writes Dean Stanley, "is remarkable; occasioned not from its being on the summit of one of the numerous hills of Judaea, like most of the towns and villages, but because it is on the edge of one of the highest tablelands of the country. ...To the traveller approaching Jerusalem from the west or east, it must always have presented the appearance...of a mountain city; breathing, as compared with the plains of Jordan, a mountain air; enthroned, as compared with Jericho and Damascus, Gaza or Tyre, on a mountain fastness" (*Sinai and Palestine*: pp. 170, 171). May not the poet also have in mind that 'ideal' elevation of which the prophets speak? e.g. Is. ii. 2; Mic. iv. 1.

the joy of the whole earth] Lam. ii. 15 combines this phrase with that of Ps. l. 2. "Is this the city that men called, The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?" Cp. Is. lx. 15.

on *the sides of the north*] Thus rendered, the words appear to be a topographical description of the situation of Mount Zion to the north of the city; or, if we render, *on the sides of the north is the citadel of the great King*, a description of the position of the Temple. But 'Mount Zion' in this Psalm is not a part of the city but the whole city (*vv.* 11, 12); a merely topographical description would be frigid in the extreme; the rendering involves a doubtful construction; and it gives a very inadequate meaning to the phrase *the sides of the north*. This phrase occurs elsewhere in Is. xiv. 13; Ezek. xxxviii. 6, 15; xxxix. 2; and in all these

3 God is known in her palaces for a refuge.
4 For lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together.

passages it means the recesses or remotest quarters of the north. In Is. xiv. 13 "the uttermost parts of the north" (R.V.) are mentioned as the locality of the sacred mountain, which according to Asiatic mythology was the abode of the gods. This mountain, corresponding to the Olympus of the Greeks, was the *Meru* of the Indians, the *Alborj* of the Persians, the *Arâlu* of the Assyrians and Babylonians. It would seem that the Psalmist boldly calls Mount Zion *the uttermost parts of the north* with reference to this mythological idea. According to this interpretation *vv.* 1, 2 may be rendered as follows:

Great is Jehovah, and exceeding worthy to be praised,
In the city of our God is his holy mountain.
Beautiful in elevation, a joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion,
The uttermost parts of the north, the citadel of the great King.

The sacred mountain of our God is not in the remote recesses of the north, but in the very midst of the city of His choice. Zion is in reality all that the Assyrians claim for their fabled mount of the gods. Their king too may style himself 'great,' but Zion is the citadel of One Who is in truth the great King, for He is the King of all the earth (xlvii. 2, 7). "The great king" was a title claimed by the king of Assyria (Is. xxxvi. 4); and the word for 'great' is not that used in *v.* 1 (*gâdôl*) but *rab*, which corresponds to the Assyrian title *sarru rabbu* (Schrader, *Cuneif. Inscr.* p. 320). 'City' (*citadel*) is not the same word as in *v.* 1 (*'îr*), but *kiryâh*, a word which does not occur again in the Psalter, but is found several times in Isaiah (xxii. 2; xxix. 1; xxxiii. 20). To many commentators it seems inconceivable that the Psalmist should allude to Assyrian mythology. But a writer of Isaiah's time might easily have become acquainted with the religious ideas of the Assyrians, and the author of the Book of Job does not hesitate to introduce popular mythological ideas. See Prof. Davidson's note on Job xxvi. 12: and cp. Is. xxvii. 1.

3—8. Jehovah's revelation of Himself as Zion's protector in the recent discomfiture of her enemies.

3. More exactly:

God hath made himself known in her palaces for a high fortress.

This verse is commonly connected with *vv.* 1, 2. But *vv.* 1, 2 describe the relation of Zion to Jehovah generally, while *v.* 3 first alludes to the recent deliverance, which is further described in *vv.* 4 ff.

in her palaces] The stately palaces of Zion which the Assyrians threatened to plunder and destroy. Cp. *v.* 13; Mic. v. 5. **High fortress** (A.V. *refuge*) is the same word as that in xlvi. 7, 11.

4. **For, lo, the kings assembled themselves** (R.V.): Sennacherib's vassal kings (Is. x. 8) met at their rendezvous (cp. Ps. ii. 2): **they passed over together**; uniting their forces they crossed the frontier and entered the land of Judah. Cp. Is. viii. 7, 8; xxviii. 15. The rendering *passed away* (R.V. marg.) is possible but unsuitable, for (1) *assembled them-*

They saw *it*, *and* so they marvelled;
They were troubled, *and* hasted away.
Fear took hold upon them there,
And pain, as of a woman in travail.
Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.
As we have heard, so have we seen
In the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God:
God will establish it for ever. Selah.
We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God,

selves needs some further explanation, and (2) it interrupts the order of the description: it is not until they have seen Jerusalem (*v.* 5) that they disperse in confusion. P.B.V. *kings of the earth* is from the Vulg. Cp. lxxvi. 12.

5. They saw; forthwith they were amazed:
They were dismayed, they made haste to flee.

Caesar's boast, *Veni, vidi, vici*, was reversed. They came to Zion, they saw it, they were smitten with panic terror. Cp. Is. xxxiii. 3.

6. Trembling took hold of them there:
Pangs, as of a woman in travail.

Cp. Ex. xv. 14, 15; and for the phrase though in a different connexion, Is. xxxiii. 14, "Trembling hath taken hold of the godless."

7. With an east wind
Thou shatterest ships of Tarshish.

As he gazes upon the wreck of the Assyrian enterprise, the poet apostrophises God with mingled awe and thankfulness. The language is plainly metaphorical. God's might is irresistible. He shatters the stately ships of Tarshish with a sudden storm: with equal ease He annihilates the vast Assyrian army. Cp. Is. xiv. 24—27, noting the phrase, "I will *break* the Assyrian in my land." For the metaphor comp. Ezek. xxvii. 26, where the fall of Tyre is described as a wreck; and Is. xxxiii. 23, where Jerusalem in her extremity (or, according to some commentators, the Assyrian power) is represented as a disabled ship.

The *east wind*, notorious for its destructiveness, is often employed as a symbol of judgement (Job xxvii. 21; Is. xxvii. 8; Jer. xviii. 17); and *ships of Tarshish*,—the largest vessels, such as were employed for the voyage to Tartessus in the S.W. of Spain (cp. 'East Indiamen')—were emblems of all that was strong and stately (Is. ii. 16). The alternative rendering of R.V. marg., 'As *with the east wind that breaketh the ships of Tarshish*,' is grammatically possible, but less suitable.

8. Experience has confirmed what tradition (cp. xliv. 1) related of God's marvellous works on behalf of His people, and justifies the confidence that He will never cease to guard the city of His choice. Cp. lxxxvii. 5; Is. lxii. 7. But all such anticipations are conditional: Israel's unfaithfulness made a literal fulfilment impossible.

9—14. The lessons of deliverance.

9. We have thought on thy lovingkindness, O God, realised it to

In the midst of thy temple.
10 According to thy name, O God, so *is* thy praise unto the
ends of the earth:
Thy right hand is full *of* righteousness.
11 Let mount Zion rejoice,
Let the daughters of Judah be glad,
Because of thy judgments.
12 Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers
thereof.
13 Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces;

ourselves as manifested in this new deliverance, while we offered our thanksgivings in the Temple courts; for there, in the immediate presence of God, men learn the true significance of events (lxxiii. 17). It suits the context less well to render *We thought on* &c., and to understand the words to refer to prayers offered before the great deliverance, in which past mercies were recalled as a ground of confidence.

10. *According to thy name*] As is thy name (R.V.). God's revelation of His power and lovingkindness receives worldwide celebration. Cp. Is. xxxiii. 13. To other nations beside Judah the destruction of the great tyrant's army was a cause for rejoicing. Cp. xlvi. 8 ff.; Nah. iii. 19.

thy right hand is full of *righteousness*] Ready to be exercised on behalf of Thy people in judgements on their enemies (*v.* 11). Cp. Is. xxxiii. 5.

11. The R.V. assimilates the rendering to that of xcvii. 8, where the same words recur:

Let mount Zion be glad,
Let the daughters of Judah rejoice.

The *daughters of Judah* are not the maidens of Judah, though the fact that women were wont to celebrate victories with dance and song may have suggested the use of the expression, but the cities of Judah, which had been captured by Sennacherib (Is. xxxvi. 1), and therefore had special cause for rejoicing at his overthrow. Country towns are regarded as 'daughters' of the metropolis. Cp. Num. xxi. 25; Josh. xvii. 11, 16; the word for *towns* in both cases literally means *daughters*.

12 ff. The inhabitants of Jerusalem had been confined within its walls during the siege: now they can freely walk round, and thankfully contemplate the safety of the walls and towers and palaces so lately menaced with destruction. Cp. Is. xxxiii. 20.

tell] I.e. *count*, as in xxii. 17; Gen. xv. 5. The retention of the archaism in R.V. is justifiable for the sake of the connexion with *v.* 13, where the same word is used for *tell=narrate*. But lately the towers had been counted with a very different object by the Assyrian officers reconnoitring the city in preparation for the siege (Is. xxxiii. 18).

13. *bulwarks*] The outer wall or rampart.

consider] Or, as R.V. marg., *traverse*. The word occurs here only,

That ye may tell *it* to the generation following.
For this God *is* our God for ever and ever:
He will be our guide *even* unto death. 14

and is of doubtful meaning. But the rendering *consider* suits the context better. In either case the object is to convince themselves of the safety of the city. P. B. V. *set up* is derived from some Jewish authorities.

that ye may tell it] Cp. xxii. 30, 31; xliv. 1.

14. *For this God* &c.] For such is God [Jehovah] our God for ever and ever. Jehovah is a God who has proved Himself the defender of His city and people, and will continue to be the same for ever.

he will be our guide even *unto death*] Beautiful as is the thought, *He* (emphatic—He and no other) *will be our guide unto death* (or, *in death*, or, *over death*), it cannot be legitimately extracted from the present text, nor would such an expression of *personal* faith form a natural conclusion to this wholly *national* Psalm. Possibly the words *'al mūth* (rendered *unto death*) should be read as one, with different vowels, *'ōlāmōth*, 'for ever.' So the LXX and Symmachus. Possibly the words are the remains of a musical direction like that of Ps. ix, *'al muth labbēn*, meaning 'set to the tune of *mūth*,' or that of Ps. xlvi, 'set to *'Alāmōth*,' which has been placed at the end of the Ps. (as in Hab. iii. 19) instead of at the beginning, as is the rule in the Psalter, or which has been accidentally transferred from the beginning of Ps. xlix. In this case the clause *he will guide us* seems incomplete, (though *he will save us* in Is. xxxiii. 22 offers an exact parallel), and we must either with Delitzsch suppose that the concluding words are lost; or, with Bickell, Cheyne, and others, transpose words from the first line to the second, and read *For* (or, *That*) *such is God* [Jehovah] *our God: He will guide us for ever and ever.* Cp. Is. xxv. 9.

PSALM XLIX.

The preceding group of Psalms contains an appeal to "all peoples" to recognise in Jehovah the Ruler of the world in virtue of His mighty deeds for Israel: this Psalm addresses "all peoples" with a theme of common interest to all humanity.

The author is a moralist. He offers teaching concerning one of those enigmas of life which perplex men and try their faith. Is not wealth after all the master-force in the world? Must not the poor tremble before its power and pay court to its splendour? Is not the lot of those who possess the means of luxurious enjoyment, however selfish, most enviable?

The Psalmist's solution of the problem is to point out the limits to the power of wealth and to its owner's tenure of it. All the wealth in the world cannot purchase exemption from death: and it must all be abandoned when its owner comes to die. Quite briefly the Psalmist expresses his own faith that righteousness will be finally triumphant

(*v.* 14), and that God will do for him what all his wealth cannot do for the rich man (*v.* 15).

Does he here break through the veil of darkness which rested over the world beyond for Israel of old, and declare his belief, if not in a resurrection, at least in a translation from the gloom of Sheol to a blessed state of communion with God? This question is a difficult one, but reasons will be given in the notes for thinking that the Psalmist's view did not reach beyond the present life, though it contains the germ of the principle by which men were raised, through bitter struggles of faith, to grasp the hope of eternal life. See also *Introd.* pp. xciii ff.

The theme of the Ps. is akin to that of Pss. xxxvii and lxxiii. But while those Psalms treat of the temptations to murmuring and disbelief which spring from the sight of high-handed wickedness prospering unchecked, we have here only incidental hints (*vv.* 5, 14) that the rich men who are spoken of are oppressors of the poor, or have amassed their wealth by injustice. They are not expressly condemned as tyrannous and oppressive, though no doubt they tended to become so. But they make a god of their wealth and pride themselves on their magnificence. Wrapped in a haughty self satisfaction, they care for nothing but their own selfish pleasure. What appals the Psalmist is not so much their wickedness as their worldliness. They ignore God and yet they prosper. The Psalm reminds us of the parables of the Rich Fool (Luke xii. 16 ff.) and the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke xvi. 19 ff.). Its moral teaching is for all men and all time. Worldliness and envy are temptations which do not lose their power. Rich and poor alike constantly need to be reminded that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth."

This Ps. is closely connected with the 'Wisdom' or religious philosophy of Israel, which, working side by side with Prophecy, was an important power in the education of the nation. It contains numerous parallels of thought and language to the Books of Job and Proverbs.

There is little to determine the date of the Psalm. But it may perhaps belong to the eighth century B.C., when the existence of great wealth and great poverty side by side in the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham could not fail to suggest the problem here discussed. There seems to be an allusion in *v.* 11 to the vast estates which are condemned by Isaiah and Micah. If so, it will be somewhat earlier than Psalms xlvi—xlviii. The structure of the Ps. is clearly marked. It consists of an introduction and two equal divisions, each of which is closed by a refrain.

i. A solemn invitation to listen, addressed to men of every nation, every rank, and every class, for the theme is one of universal interest (1—4).

ii. Why should the power of wealth be feared, though men make a god of their riches? Wealth cannot save from death: and its owner must inevitably surrender it when he dies (5—12).

iii. Sheol is the destination of the richest and most powerful. But the upright will be finally triumphant; and the Psalmist in fellowship with God has a hope which no wealth can purchase. There is nothing to fear in worldly magnificence, for it is doomed to a speedy end (13—20).

To the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

Hear this, all ye people; 49
Give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world:
Both low and high, 2
Rich and poor, together.
My mouth shall speak of wisdom; 3
And the meditation of my heart *shall be of* understanding.
I will incline mine ear to a parable: 4
I will open my dark saying upon the harp.

1—4. A solemn introduction, addressed to men of every nation and every class, emphasising the importance of the Psalmist's theme.

1. *all ye people*] Rather, **all ye peoples**, as in xlvii. 1. All peoples, all the inhabitants of the world, are summoned to listen, for the theme is one of universal interest; it concerns all humanity. It is characteristic of the 'Wisdom' or religious philosophy of Israel to view the problems of life in their wider aspect. It treats of man as man, not of Israel as the chosen people. The first line recalls the opening words of Micah's prophecy (Mic. i. 2), and the words of his older namesake (1 Kings xxii. 28). For the form of the verse cp. Elihu's words (Job xxxiv. 2).

the world] A peculiar word, found in this sense only in Ps. xvii. 14. It denotes the lapse of time, the fleeting age, the world as uncertain and transitory.

2. *Both low and high*] So the A.V. rightly paraphrases the Heb. *sons of mankind* (*ādām*) *and sons of men* (*'īsh*): those whose personality is lost in the common multitude, and those who are individually distinguished; plebeians and patricians. *Ādām* corresponds to ἄνθρωπος, *homo*; *'ish* to ἀνήρ, *vir*. Cp. iv. 2; lxii. 9. The P.B.V. (*high and low*) wrongly inverts the meanings.

rich and poor together] The rich that they may recognise the vanity of riches, and take warning: the poor that they may learn to be contented with their lot, and not to envy the rich.

3. My mouth shall speak wisdom,
And the meditation of my heart shall be (full of) understanding.

The words for *wisdom* and *understanding* are both plural in the Heb., denoting manifold wisdom and profound insight.

4. The poet receives by revelation what he desires to teach. He will bend his ear to listen to the voice of God before he ventures himself to speak to men. *Māshāl*, rendered *parable*, means (1) primarily *a comparison*, (2) *a proverb*, as frequently involving a comparison, (3) *a parable*, as the extension of a proverb, (4) *a poem*, either contemptuous (Is. xiv. 4) or didactic, as here. *Chīdāh*, denotes (1) *an enigma* or *riddle* (Judg. xiv. 12 f.; 1 Kings x. 1), (2) a *parable* or *simile* (Ezek. xvii. 2), (3) any *profound* or *obscure utterance*, *a problem*, *dark saying*. Both words occur together in lxxviii. 2; Prov. i. 6; Ezek. xvii. 2. The prosperity of the godless was one of the great 'enigmas of life' to the pious

5 Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil,
When the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?
6 They that trust in their wealth,
And boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;
7 None *of them* can by any means redeem *his* brother,

Israelite, demanding a solution which could only be partially given before the fuller revelation of Christ "brought life and immortality to light." What he has learned on this perplexing question he will *open upon the harp*, set it forth in a poem accompanied by music.

5–12. The limits to the power and the possession of wealth.

5. *in the days of evil*] Or, of the evil man: when evil or evil men seem to have the upper hand, uncontrolled by any divine law of righteousness. Cp. xciv. 13.

when *the iniquity of my heels* &c.] Apparently this means, when his own false steps and errors of conduct surround him and threaten to prove his ruin. But apart from the strangeness of the expression, this meaning does not suit the context. It is better to render with R.V.,

When iniquity at my heels compasseth me about,

when the injustice of wealthy neighbours dogs his footsteps and threatens to trip him up. But better still is the rendering of R.V. marg., which gives a clear sense, and a good connexion with *v.* 6,

When the iniquity of them that would supplant me compasseth me about,
Even of them that trust.....riches?

He is in danger from wealthy and unscrupulous neighbours, who are eager to trip him up and get him into their power. Cp. Jer. ix. 4.

7. The first answer to the question, 'Wherefore should I fear'? These men make a god of their wealth. They trust in it and glory in it, as the godly man trusts in Jehovah and glories in Him (xxxii. 10; xxxiv. 2). But how powerless it is! It cannot deliver anyone from death. If the rich man's friends have so little to hope, his victims have little to fear.

The language of this verse and the next is borrowed from the ancient law in Ex. xxi. 30, where the words *ransom* and *redemption of life* (or *soul*) occur together, the latter phrase being found nowhere else. If a man's neglect to keep a dangerous ox under proper control had been the cause of another man's death, his life was forfeit. But he might redeem his life by paying a ransom to the relatives of the deceased person. Probably he would always be allowed to do so, and the penalty of death would never be exacted. Another law prohibited the pardon of a murderer upon the mere payment of a fine (Num. xxxv. 31), lest rich men should regard the taking of life as a matter of indifference. Thus the idea of the payment of money as the equivalent of a life was familiar. There were cases in which wealth could deliver from death, when man was dealing with man. But when God claims the life, riches are of no avail.

his *brother*] Lit. *a brother*: his most intimate relative or friend.

Nor give to God a ransom for him:
(For the redemption of their soul is precious, 8
And it ceaseth for ever:)
That he should still live for ever, 9
And not see corruption.
For he seeth *that* wise *men* die, 10
Likewise the fool and the brutish person perish,
And leave their wealth to others.

Possibly there may be an allusion to the use of the word in dirges. See Jer. xxii. 18. But the position of the word at the beginning of the sentence is peculiar, and an adversative particle seems to be needed. It has therefore been plausibly conjectured that we should read *ăk*, 'surely' or 'but' (as in *v.* 15), in place of *ăch*, 'brother,' and, with a slight alteration of the vowels, render thus:

But no one can by any means redeem himself,
Nor give to God the ransom He requires.

The reading of the Massoretic Text however is attested by the LXX and other Ancient Versions.

8. Render:

For too costly is the redemption of their life,
And he must let it alone for ever.

The sum to be paid by the man whose life was forfeit was to be assessed, probably in proportion to his culpability and his means: but there is no ransom which can be paid to God; it is hopeless to think of attempting it. Cp. Matt. v. 26. *Their* refers to *brother*, regarded generically; or, if the reading *But* is adopted, to the rich men.

9. The preceding verse is a parenthesis, and this verse is to be connected with *v.* 7 and rendered,

That he should live on perpetually,
(And) should not see the pit.

'To see the pit'=to experience death. The word *shachath*, rendered *corruption* in the A.V., must mean 'pit' in some passages where it occurs (e.g. vii. 15; xxx. 9), and may have this meaning always. Cp. note on xvi. 10.

10. *For he seeth* that *wise* men *die*] Experience shews the rich man that all alike come to the grave. Even wisdom cannot deliver its possessor. This rendering is on the whole preferable to that of R.V. marg., *Yea, he* (the brother or the rich man) *shall see it* (the pit): *wise men die* &c. 'Wise' and 'fool' are words characteristic of the Wisdom literature. The former occurs but once again in the Psalter, and 46 times in Proverbs: the latter but twice in the Psalter, and 49 times in Proverbs.

likewise &c.] **Fool and brutish perish together.** Perhaps the use of different verbs is intended to distinguish between the end of the wise man and the end of the fool and the brutish, the self-confident braggart and the mere stupid animal.

and leave &c.] Or, abandon. The point of course is not that they

11 Their inward *thought is, that* their houses *shall continue* for ever,
And their dwelling places to all generations;
They call *their* lands after their own names.
12 Nevertheless man *being* in honour abideth not:
He is like the beasts *that* perish.
13 This their way *is* their folly:
Yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah.

can pass on their property to their heirs, but that they must themselves surrender it. Wealth can neither prolong life, nor be retained by its owner at death. Cp. Luke xii. 20.

11. *Their inward* thought is &c.] If they do reflect that they must die, they comfort themselves with the delusion that their houses will last for ever, and their names be perpetuated in the names of their estates, which like builders of cities or conquerors (2 Sam. xii. 28) they have named after themselves. But the rendering *their inward thought* is questionable; and the LXX, Vulg., Syr., and Targ., all point to a different reading, involving simply a transposition of letters (QBRM for QRBM), which gives the sense:

Graves are their houses for ever;
The dwelling-places for all generations
Of those who called lands after their own names.

This reading suits the context best. They must surrender their wealth, and a narrow grave will be the only possession left to the man who called a vast estate by his own name. The first line recalls the name 'eternal house' applied to the grave in Eccles. xii. 5, and in inscriptions: cp. 'eternal place,' Tobit iii. 6: and Isaiah calls Shebna's pretentious sepulchre a 'dwelling-place' (Is. xxii. 16). Is there an ironical allusion in the last line to the vast estates of Isaiah's day (Is. v. 8)?

12. If we retain the reading of the Massoretic Text in *v.* 11, we may render with R.V., **But man abideth not in honour.**

If the reading *graves* is adopted, *v.* 12 sums up the picture:

So man in splendour hath no continuance.

However imposing may be man's magnificence, it must come to an end. The LXX and Syr. read here, as in *v.* 20, *Man being in honour understandeth not.* But refrains are not always identical in form, and the difference in the Heb. text is significant.

that perish] Or, *are cut off*, a different word from that in *v.* 10.

13—15. The fate of the godless rich man is further described, and contrasted with the Psalmist's confidence.

13. A difficult verse. The best rendering appears to be:

This is the way of them that are self-confident,
And of their followers who [lit. *those who after them*] **approve their sayings.**

The verse sums up the preceding verses, like Job xviii. 21; xx. 29. So it fares with these self-confident fools and their deluded followers

Like sheep they are laid in the grave;
Death shall feed *on* them;
And the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning;
And their beauty shall consume *in* the grave from their dwelling.
But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave:
For he shall receive me. Selah.

(lxxiii. 10; Job xxi. 33). Then, after an interlude, the fate of the wicked is more fully described in *v.* 14, in contrast with the hope of the godly, *v.* 15.

The word *kĕsel* denotes the stupid self-confidence which is characteristic of the 'fool' (*Ps.* v. 10). Cp. Job xxxi. 24. Aquila and Jerome render *run* instead of *approve*. The difference is simply one of vocalisation, and in their day the text had no written vowels. With this reading we might render: *And of those who run after them at their beck.*

14. Like sheep are they put into Sheol;
Death shepherdeth them;
And the upright have dominion over them in the morning,
And their form shall Sheol consume, that it have no more habitation.

What becomes of the wicked? They are driven down to Sheol like a flock of sheep, mere animals that they are (*v.* 12); there Death is their shepherd: the king of terrors rules them at his will. They perish in the night, and in the morning the righteous awake, triumphant over their fallen oppressors. The night of trouble is over; the morning of deliverance has dawned (xxx. 5). But what is meant by 'the morning'? Not, as yet, the resurrection morning; but the morning of the day which Jehovah is making, in which "all the proud, and all that work wickedness, shall be as stubble...and ye shall tread down the wicked, for they shall be as ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I do make, saith the LORD of hosts" (Mal. iv. 1, 3): a day in the history of the world corresponding to the day when the restored Israel "shall rule over their oppressors" (Is. xiv. 2). Comp. Ps. civ. 35, and Ps. xxxvii.

The precise meaning of the last line is doubtful and the text possibly corrupt. Their form, or perhaps, their beauty, is delivered up to Sheol to consume: a poetical way of expressing that their bodies moulder in the grave: all that made such a brave show upon earth has no more existence, no longer needs any abode. Possibly we should make a slight change in the text, and render, *Their form shall be consumed, Sheol shall be their habitation.* Cp. A.V. marg.

15. While the wicked become the prey of Sheol, the Psalmist is delivered from its power. But in what sense? In this life, or after death? A careful study of the context and of similar phrases elsewhere seems to shew that the Psalmist looks with confidence for deliverance from the premature and penal death of the wicked, but does not antici-

16 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich,
When the glory of his house is increased;

pate escape from death or express his belief in a resurrection. The verse corresponds to *vv.* 7, 8. While wealth is powerless to avert death, God can and will deliver His servant. Similar phrases are constantly used of deliverance from imminent peril of death. Cp. xxx. 3; xxxiii. 18 f.; lxxxvi. 13; cxii. 4; cxxxviii. 7: and particularly lxxxix. 48; Job xxxiii. 22 ff.; Hosea xiii. 14; see also xvi. 10, and note there. *For he shall receive me* is to be explained by the use of the same word in xviii. 16 (A.V. *he took me*): He will take hold of me and deliver me. It is possible that the verse should be divided thus: *But God will redeem my life* [*soul*]: *out of the grasp of Sheol will he surely take me.*

Delitzsch indeed thinks that *he shall receive me* contains an allusion to the history of Enoch (Gen. v. 24), where the same word is used, "He was not; for God *took him.*" He holds that in a moment of lofty aspiration the Psalmist expresses a bold hope that he may escape death, and be taken directly into the presence of God. But this interpretation is improbable: it does not appear that he, any more than the author of Ps. lxxxix, anticipates that any mortal man can finally escape death.

Many commentators find in the passage "the strong hope of eternal life with God, if not the hope of a resurrection." But the context and the parallel passages lead to a different conclusion. Certainly the doctrine of a future life was not to the Psalmist a revealed certainty to which he could appeal for a solution of the enigmas of life which were perplexing him. Probably, as has been said before on Ps. xvi, the truth is that the antithesis in the Psalmist's mind is not between life here and life hereafter (as we speak), but between life with and life without God; and for the moment, in the consciousness of the blessedness of fellowship with God, death fades from his view. The rich man's wealth, which he is tempted to envy, cannot buy from God one moment's prolongation of life; nay, the wicked are doomed to a premature and miserable death: while the Psalmist rejoices in the assured protection and fellowship of God.

But whatever may have been the extent or the limitation of the Psalmist's view, his words contain the germ and principle of the doctrine of the Resurrection; and for ourselves, as we use them, they will bear the fuller meaning with which they have been illuminated by Christ's Resurrection.

16—20. The rich man cannot carry his wealth with him when he dies. The thought already expressed in *v.* 10 is resumed and further developed.

16. *Be not thou afraid*] The Psalmist addresses himself, repeating the question of *v.* 5 in the form of an exhortation (the Heb. word is the same), or any individual who is listening to him.

glory] The magnificence and splendour which accompany wealth. Cp. Prov. iii. 16; viii. 18.

For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: 17
His glory shall not descend after him.
Though whiles he lived he blessed his soul: 18
And *men* will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself.
He shall go to the generation of his fathers; 19
They shall never see light.
Man *that is* in honour, and understandeth not, 20
Is like the beasts *that* perish.

17. Cp. Job i. 21; Eccl. v. 15; 1 Tim. vi. 7; and parallels from classical authors: e.g. Propertius IV. 5. 13:

Haud ullas portabis opes Acherontis ad undas:
Nudus at inferna, stulte, vehere, rate.

18. *blessed his soul*] Congratulated himself on his good fortune, flattering himself that he was beyond the reach of misfortune. Cp. Deut. xxix. 19; Luke xii. 19.

men *will praise thee*] Men praise thee (R.V.). The words are a parenthesis, addressed to the rich man. The unthinking multitude (cp. *v.* 13 *b*) worship success and wealth. They see nothing wrong in the selfish misuse of riches.

19. *He shall go*] There should be a comma at the end of *v.* 18, as in R.V., for *v.* 19 forms the apodosis to it. The Heb. verb may be either the 3rd person fem., the subject being *the soul*, or the 2nd person masc.; so either, 'Though he blessed his soul...it shall go' &c.: or, 'Though men praise thee...thou shalt go.' The first alternative is preferable. The second involves an intolerably harsh change of person ('*Thou* shalt go...*his* fathers'). For the phrase cp. Gen. xv. 15, "Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace." The more usual expression for dying is, "he was gathered to his people," or, "his fathers." Families are contemplated as reunited in Sheol, where existence is a shadowy reflection of life on earth.

they shall never see light] 'They' refers to the rich men. The Heb. mind passes from the class to the individual and from the individual to the class with a facility to which we are not accustomed. But it is perhaps better to take the phrase as a relative clause referring to 'his fathers'; Who shall never more see the light. He goes to join the ranks of those whose lot is fixed irrevocably, who will never return to life. For the phrase cp. lviii. 8; Job iii. 16; Eccl. vi. 5.

20. The refrain of *v.* 12, repeated with a significant variation, qualifying the previous statement. It is not the rich and honourable man, as such, who is no better than the cattle that perish; but the rich man who is destitute of discernment, and knows no distinction between false and true riches, reckoning earthly and transitory wealth more precious than spiritual and eternal fellowship with God.

PSALM L.

This Psalm, like the preceding one, is a didactic Psalm. But while the lesson of Psalm xlix is an echo of the teaching of the 'Wise Men,' that of Ps. l is an echo of the teaching of the Prophets: and while, in accordance with the characteristic method of 'Wisdom,' "all peoples" are addressed in Ps. xlix, in accordance with the characteristic method of Prophecy the people of Jehovah is addressed in Ps. l.

The Psalm is a solemn vision of judgement. It is finely dramatic in form. As in Isaiah i and Micah vi, Jehovah puts Israel upon its trial in the presence of all Nature. He is at once Plaintiff and Judge. The two speeches in which He exposes the shortcomings of His people are introduced by a prologue, and summed up in a brief epilogue.

i. In a solemn introduction the Advent of God to judge His people is described. As He came of old from Sinai in the midst of storm and lightning to promulgate the Law, so now He is represented as appearing from Zion surrounded by these symbols of His majesty to enforce it. Heaven and earth are summoned to be witnesses of the trial (1—6).

ii. God speaks; and first He addresses the mass of the people, who imagine that their duty to Him is fulfilled by the formal offering of material sacrifices. He shews them that He has no need of material sacrifices. What He desires is the sacrifice of the heart, expressed in sincere thankfulness and loyal trust (7—15).

iii. Then in a sterner tone He addresses the hypocrites who glibly repeat His laws with their lips, but shamelessly break them in act by gross offences against their neighbours (16—21).

iv. The Psalm concludes with an epilogue of warning and promise (22, 23).

Thus the Ps. deals with man's duty towards God and his duty towards his neighbour; with the nature of acceptable service, and the obligations of social morality. Its two main divisions answer to the two great divisions of the Decalogue. The whole corresponds to the teaching which was constantly being repeated by the prophets, and is briefly summed up in the sentence, "I desire lovingkindness, and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." The principle comes down from the first of the prophets (1 Sam. xv. 22), and finds its most forcible exposition in Isaiah i. 11 ff., to which the Psalm is intimately related, and Mic. vi. 6 ff. The same thought is expressed in the Wisdom-literature in Prov. xxi. 3, and Ecclesiasticus xxxv. 1—7; and elsewhere in the Psalter, e.g. in Ps. xl. 6 ff.; li. 16 ff.; lxix. 30 f.; xv; xxiv. 1 ff. But none of these passages is to be understood as an absolute condemnation of sacrifice. Sacrifice was the recognised bond of the relation between God and men, though it was not, as men were prone to think, the sum and substance of that relation. The primitive institution of sacrifice was continued and developed in the Mosaic legislation. The covenant of Sinai was sanctioned by sacrifice, though it was not based upon it; the Decalogue contained no injunction to offer sacrifice. It is not the sacrificial system in itself, but the sacrificial system emptied of "its moral significance as the recognition of the holiness of God and the

sinfulness of the sinner," and made a substitute for the higher duties of devotion and morality, or combined with a glaring defiance of those duties, which is denounced by prophet and psalmist as a thing which God hates. See Oehler's *O. T. Theology*, § 201.

To what date is the Psalm to be assigned? Clearly it belongs to a time when sacrificial worship was scrupulously maintained, but a low standard of morality was united with punctilious ceremonial observance. We know from the prophets Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah, that this was conspicuously the case in the eighth century B.C., and to this period the Psalm may most safely be assigned. Delitzsch indeed regarded it as an original Psalm of David's musician Asaph, but the tendency to formalism does not seem to have been specially characteristic of that time. Some critics place it after the Exile, alleging that *v.* 5 implies the dispersion of the nation. But this inference cannot legitimately be drawn from the verse: and on the other hand, would any poet after the Return have ventured to call Zion 'the perfection of beauty,' in view of the past glories of the city and Temple which were never restored? Moreover Lam. ii. 15, "Is this the city that men called The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth"? combines *v.* 2 and xlviii. 2: and Ps. xcvii, which is acknowledged to belong to the time of the Return, is based upon reminiscences of this Psalm together with Pss. xlvii, xlviii.

This Psalm may then best be referred to the same period as the preceding Psalms. A somewhat later date, in the reign of Josiah, has been suggested, but the close relation between the Psalm and Isaiah i is in favour of the earlier date.

A Psalm of Asaph.

The mighty God, *even* the LORD, hath spoken, and called 50
the earth

On the title *A Psalm of Asaph*, and the general characteristics of the Asaph Psalms see Intr. to Book III, pp. 427 ff.

1—6. A solemn introduction, describing the Advent of Jehovah to judge His people. Of old He appeared at Sinai in the midst of lightnings and storm to give the Law: now He comes forth from Zion with the same tokens of power and majesty to enforce it.

1. *The mighty God*, even *the LORD*] **El Elohim Jehovah.** The three names, representing three aspects of the Divine character, are combined to emphasise the majesty of Him with Whom Israel has to do. *El* represents Him as the Mighty One; *Elōhim* perhaps (the original meaning is doubtful) as the Awful One in Whom are united all manifold excellences of Deity; *Jehovah* as the Self-revealing One. *Elōhim* is His name as the God of nature and creation: *Jehovah* as the God of the covenant and of grace. The same threefold combination is found, twice repeated, in Josh. xxii. 22, in the solemn asseveration by the trans-Jordanic tribes of their innocence of any wrong motive in

From the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.
2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God hath shined.
3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence:
A fire shall devour before him,
And it shall be very tempestuous round about him.

erecting the altar of Witness. It occurs nowhere else in exactly the same form, but similar combinations are found. See Gen. xxxiii. 20; xlvi. 3, "El, the God of thy father"; Deut. iv. 31, "Jehovah thy God (*Elohim*) is a merciful God" (*El*); v. 9, "I Jehovah thy God (*Elohim*) am a jealous God" (*El*); and similarly vi. 15; vii. 9, "Jehovah thy God, he is God (*Elohim*); the faithful God" (*El*).

It is noteworthy that two other names of God occur in this Ps. He is called 'the Most High' (*Elyōn*), as the Supreme Ruler of the Universe (*v.* 14), cp. vii. 17; xviii. 13; and see Appendix, Note ii. In *v.* 22, *Elōah*, the singular of *Elōhim*, is used. This form is found frequently in Job; in Deut. xxxii. 15, 17; Is. xliv. 8; Hab. i. 11, iii. 3; and in a few other passages; but elsewhere in the Psalter only in xviii. 31; cxiv. 7; cxxxix. 19.

The rendering *The God of gods, the* LORD (Jehovah), is not probable, though its adoption by the LXX has given it a wide currency.

hath spoken] In the summons which the next line describes. He breaks the silence which has been misunderstood to mean indifference (*v.* 21) by proclaiming a great assize.

and called the earth] The earth in all its length and breadth, with all its inhabitants, is summoned to be the witness of the trial.

2. *Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty*] This rendering is certainly preferable to that of P. B. V., 'Out of Zion hath God appeared in perfect beauty." Cp. xlviii. 2; and Lam. ii. 15, which unites phrases taken from both Psalms. In 1 Macc. ii. 12 the Temple is called "our beauty and our glory." Zion is now the abode of Jehovah, where He sits enthroned upon the cherubim (lxxx. 1). From thence, as of old from Sinai, He **hath shined forth** (R.V.): a word specially used of that dazzling blaze of light which is the symbol of God's Presence. Cp. Deut. xxxiii. 2; Ps. lxxx. 1; xciv. 1.

3. In the preceding verses the Theophany is described as already visibly beginning. Instead of simply continuing that description, the poet-seer "imagines himself as an eager and interested spectator," and prays God to come near and declare His will:

Let our God come, and not keep silence!
Fire devoureth before him,
And round about him it is very tempestuous.

See Driver, *Hebrew Tenses*, § 58; and for similar constructions cp. xli. 2 (note); Is. ii. 9.

Lightnings and storm are the outward symbols which express the awfulness of God's coming to judgement. He is 'a consuming fire' (Deut. iv. 24; ix. 3; Hebr. xii. 29) devouring His enemies; an irresist-

He shall call to the heavens from above,
And to the earth, that *he* may judge his people.
Gather my saints together unto me;
Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

ible whirlwind (lviii. 9), sweeping them away like chaff (i. 4; Is. xxix. 5). Cp. Ex. xix. 16, 18; Is. xxix. 6; Ps. xviii. 7 ff.; xcvii. 2 ff.

4. *He shall call to the heavens from above*] Better, in continuation of the preceding verse, Let him call to the heavens above. The object of the summons is 'that he may judge his people.' Heaven and earth, the whole world of nature, are summoned to be witnesses of the judgement, for they are far older than man, and have watched the whole course of Israel's history. Cp. Deut. iv. 26, 32; xxxi. 28; xxxii. 1; Isa. i. 2; Mic. i. 2; vi. 1, 2. The poetical idea finds a strange equivalent in the conception of modern science that every action is recorded by a corresponding physical change, so that Nature is in truth a witness to the actions of man[1].

5. *Gather* &c.] To whom is the command addressed? Perhaps to the angels who are God's ministers of judgement (Matt. xxiv. 31), and by whom He appears attended (Deut. xxxiii. 2); less probably to heaven and earth, which according to the analogy of the parallel passages, are summoned as witnesses. But perhaps no definite reference at all is intended, and no particular messengers are in the Psalmist's mind (cp. Is. xiii. 2).

my saints] The word *chāsīd* denotes those who are the objects of Jehovah's *chesed* or lovingkindness. 'Saint,' like 'servant,' as applied to Israel, expresses the relation in which Jehovah has placed the nation towards Himself, without necessarily implying that its character corresponds to its calling (lxxix. 2; Is. xlii. 19). The indictment against many of the Israelites is that their conduct towards their fellow-men is entirely destitute of that 'lovingkindness' which ought to reflect the lovingkindness of Jehovah towards them. On the word *chāsīd* see Appendix, Note i.

those that have made &c.] Or, those that make &c. The reference is not merely to the original ratification of the covenant with the nation at Sinai (Ex. xxiv. 5 ff.), but to the recognition and maintenance of it by each fresh generation with repeated sacrifices. The previous line refers (in the word 'saints') to the divine grace which is the originating cause of the covenant with Israel, this line to the human act which acknowledges that grace and the obligations which it entails. It has been thought strange that the Ps. which depreciates sacrifice should recognise it as the sanction of the covenant, and it has been suggested that these words are merely 'ironical.' It is however impossible to regard them as merely ironical. Though the Decalogue contained no command to offer sacrifice, the primitive institution of sacrifice was sanctioned and regulated by the Book of the Covenant (Ex. xx. 24 ff).

[1] See Babbage, *Ninth Bridgewater Treatise*, ch. IX., "On the Permanent Impression of our Words and Actions on the Globe we inhabit."

6 And the heavens shall declare his righteousness:
For God *is* judge himself. Selah.

7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak;
O Israel, and I will testify against thee:
I *am* God, *even* thy God.
8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices
Or thy burnt offerings, *to have been* continually before me.
9 I will take no bullock out of thy house,

Sacrifice had its divinely appointed place in the economy of the old Covenant, though not that which formal and hypocritical worshippers imagined. It could not be a substitute for devotion and morality; but its abuse did not abrogate its use. See Oehler's *O. T. Theology*, § 201.

6. Better (unless we alter the vocalisation and render, *and let the heavens declare*),

And the heavens declare his righteousness,
For God is about to judge.

While the defendants are being gathered, the Psalmist hears the heavens, which have been summoned to witness the trial, solemnly proclaiming the justice of the Judge, as a guarantee of the impartiality of His judgement. This explanation is supported by the use of the perfect tense in xcvii. 6, a passage which is obviously based upon this Psalm.

7—15. The trial begins. God is the accuser as well as the judge. Israel's sacrifices are unexceptionable, but it is not slain beasts which the Lord of all the earth desires, but the devotion of the heart, exhibited in thanksgiving and trust. The people as a whole are addressed. The duty which is enforced is their duty towards God, corresponding to the first Table of the Decalogue.

7. *I will testify against thee*] Or, **I will protest unto thee**, of solemn warning and exhortation. Cp. lxxxi. 8, another Asaphite Psalm.

I am God, even thy God] The words which stand at the head of the Decalogue, with *God* substituted for *Jehovah* by the Elohistic editor of the Psalm. Cp. lxxxi. 10, where *Jehovah* is retained. They express the relation of Jehovah to Israel, upon which was founded His right to give them a law, and now to call them to account for their neglect of it.

8. Render with R.V.,

I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices;
And thy burnt offerings are continually before me.

This rendering is grammatically preferable to that of R.V. marg. *Nor for thy burnt offerings, which are* &c., which gives substantially the same sense. God's indictment does not relate to sacrifice: the stated offerings are duly presented. *Continually* seems to allude to the 'continual burnt offering,' which was offered daily, morning and evening. See Num. xxviii. 3 ff.

9 ff. The owner of the vast herds of animals which roam the forests and range over a thousand mountains is not like some earthly king who

Nor he goats out of thy folds.
For every beast of the forest *is* mine, 10
And the cattle upon a thousand hills.
I know all the fowls of the mountains: 11
And the wild beasts of the field *are* mine.
If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: 12
For the world *is* mine, and the fulness thereof.
Will I eat the flesh of bulls, 13
Or drink the blood of goats?
Offer unto God thanksgiving; 14
And pay thy vows unto the most High:
And call upon me in the day of trouble: 15

comes and takes the choicest of his subjects' possessions at his will (1 Sam. viii. 16 f.). The phrase rendered *upon a thousand hills* may mean *upon the mountains where thousands are*. The construction in either case is peculiar, and it has been conjectured that we should read *upon the mountains of God*, as in xxxvi. 6; but the alteration is hardly necessary.

11. *The wild beasts of the field*] A peculiar phrase, found only in another Asaphite Psalm (lxxx. 13), meaning probably all that moveth in the field, including the 'creeping thing' (Gen. i. 24 f).

are *mine*] Lit., *are with me*, i.e. *are in my sight* (P. B. V.), or, *in my mind* (R.V. marg.).

12 f. If God had need of sustenance, He would not be dependent upon man for it: but a spiritual Being needs no material support.

12. *the world* is *mine* &c.] Cp. xxiv. 1; lxxxix. 11; Ex. xix. 5; Deut. x. 14; Job xli. 11; 1 Cor. x. 26.

13. Such a gross and material notion of sacrifice was common in heathen countries, and the survival of the phrase 'bread' or 'food of Jehovah' seems to indicate that it once existed even in Israel. See Lev. iii. 11; xxi. 6, 8, 17, 21; &c. See Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 207.

14, 15. What sacrifice then does God desire? Not the material sacrifices of the altar, but the offering of the heart.

14. *Offer* &c.] Lit., *sacrifice unto God thanksgiving*: hence R.V., offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving. The context makes it clear that spiritual sacrifices of thanksgiving are meant, not the material 'sacrifices of thanksgiving' (Lev. vii. 12) as contrasted with burnt offerings. Cp. lxix. 30 f; li. 17; Hos. xiv. 2.

and pay &c.] i.e., by such spiritual sacrifice thou shalt discharge thy vows (Lev. vii. 16). Cp. lxi. 8.

15. *call upon me* &c.] Prayer is the proof of trust. Cp. Ps. xx. 1; yet note that that Psalm contains a reference to the acceptableness of material sacrifice (*v.* 3).

I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

16 But unto the wicked God saith,
What hast thou to do to declare my statutes,
Or *that* thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?
17 Seeing thou hatest instruction,
And castest my words behind thee.
18 When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him,
And hast been partaker with adulterers.

The LXX. here inserts a *Selah*, which would appropriately mark the close of this division of the Ps. Cp. *v.* 6.

16—21. In the preceding verses God has reproved the formalist:—the man who regarded the offering of sacrifice as the essence of religion. He now turns to address the wicked man:—the hypocrite, who repeated His commandments and professed allegiance to Him, while he deliberately set those commandments at defiance by his conduct. To him God adopts a sterner tone. The offences with which he is charged are breaches of the commandments of the second Table of the Decalogue, neglect of the simplest moral duties toward his neighbour. The general reproof in *vv.* 16, 17 is followed by specific charges of breaking the eighth, seventh, and ninth commandments, and the address concludes with a stern warning, *v.* 21. Comp. generally Hos. iv. 1, 2; Rom. ii. 17—24.

16. What meanest thou by rehearsing my statutes, and by having taken (R.V. rightly, and that thou hast taken) my covenant in thy mouth? The people had pledged themselves to observe the conditions of the covenant as laid down in the 'book of the covenant,' of which the Decalogue ('the tables of the covenant') was the first and most important part (Ex. xxiv. 7), and these men professed to recognise their duty as Israelites. Cp. Is. xxix. 13; Matt. xv. 8.

17. *instruction*] Or, *correction*; the whole discipline of moral education; a word occurring here only in the Psalter, but common in Proverbs, where it is the mark of the fool and the scorner to despise instruction. Cp. Deut. viii. 5; xi. 2.

and castest &c.] Lit., and hast cast, flung them away out of sight and got rid of them. Contrast David's behaviour, xviii. 22. *My words* includes all God's commandments, but points especially to the 'ten words' of the Decalogue (Deut. iv. 13; cp. Ex. xx. 1).

18. *then thou consentedst with him*] The original is stronger: thou didst delight thyself with him, didst gladly associate with him. Cf. Job xxxiv. 9. R.V. omits *then*. The LXX vocalises the consonants differently and renders, *thou didst run along with him* (cp. Prov. i. 16): but the Massoretic reading is preferable.

and hast been partaker &c.] Lit., *and thy portion was with adulterers:* thou didst make common cause with them, condoning and sharing their sin.

Thou givest thy mouth to evil,
And thy tongue frameth deceit.
Thou sittest *and* speakest against thy brother;
Thou slanderest thine own mother's son.
These *things* hast thou done, and I kept silence;
Thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such a one* as thyself:
But I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine eyes.
Now consider this, ye that forget God,
Lest I tear *you* in pieces, and *there be* none to deliver.

19. Thou hast let loose thy mouth for evil,
And thy tongue contriveth deceit.

Giving way to unbridled speech, evil in substance and mischievous in aim: contriving a whole structure of deliberate falsehoods.

20. *Thou sittest* emphasises the deliberateness of the slander. Cp. "the session of scorners," i. 1. *Thy brother* might mean any Israelite; but the alternative *thine own mother's son* (cp. lxix. 8, note) in the parallel line indicates that it is to be understood literally. The Psalmist describes a state of moral degeneracy in which even the closest ties of kinship are ignored. Cp. Mic. vii. 6; Jer. ix. 4.

thou slanderest] Lit. *dost allege a fault against*. This rendering suits the parallelism, but the phrase (which occurs here only) is of uncertain meaning, and may mean *givest a thrust against* (R.V. marg.), or, *settest a stumbling block for*.

21. When thou didst these things, and I kept silence, refraining from immediate condemnation of thy conduct by condign punishment, thou didst mistake longsuffering for indifference, and think that I cared as little as thyself for the laws of morality.

that I was] This rendering hardly represents the original, which means *that I should be* or *prove myself*. It is the same word Ehyeh, *I am*, or *I will be*, which is found in Ex. iii. 14, in God's proclamation of Himself as the Self-revealing One, '*I will be that I will be*.' The wicked man degrades his conception of God into a reflection of himself, and fancies that Jehovah as He reveals Himself will prove to be only like a man.

set them *in order*] All the offences of which thou art guilty. The word is a forensic term, used of drawing up the various counts of an indictment. Cp. Job xxiii. 4; xxxiii. 5.

22, 23. Practical conclusion, addressed to both classes: to the formal worshippers who 'forget God' by ignoring the spiritual character of the worship which He desires, as well as to the hypocrites whose conduct proves that they "refuse to have Him in their knowledge."

22. *ye that forget God*] *Elōah:* see note on *v.* 1. For the phrase cp. ix. 17; Job viii. 13; and for the thought, x. 4.

lest I tear &c.] Like a lion. Cp. Hos. v. 14.

23 Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me:
And to him that ordereth *his* conversation *aright*
Will I shew the salvation of God.

23. *Whoso offereth praise*] He that offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving, as in *v.* 14. This line sums up the teaching of *vv.* 7—15 on the nature of true worship: and it is natural to expect the second line to sum up the teaching of *vv.* 16—21 on the obligations of moral duty. This it does if the rendering of A.V. can be retained, '*to him that ordereth* his *conversation* aright,' i.e. takes heed to his way of life, or orders it in accordance with My commandments. But *aright* is not in the Heb., and it is doubtful if this sense can fairly be extracted from the text. Hence the rendering of R.V. marg. has been proposed, *and prepareth a way that I may shew him* &c., which is grammatically unexceptionable, but does not fit the context. Probably some slight correction of the text is needed, such as, *He that keepeth my way* (xviii. 21; xxxvii. 34), or, *my words* (*v.* 17; cxix. 17, 101), *to him will I shew the salvation of God.* Cp. xci. 16.

PSALM LI.

This Psalm is the first of eighteen Psalms bearing the name of David, which appear to have been taken from some earlier collection by the compiler of the Elohistic Psalter. Eight of them have titles connecting them with historical incidents in the life of David. Most recent commentators find the contents of these Psalms unsuitable to the occasions indicated, and regard the titles as arbitrarily prefixed by the compiler. In some instances this appears to be the case; but it may be doubted whether we are always capable of judging what might or might not have been considered appropriate to a particular occasion. Some of these Psalms may be original Davidic Psalms, altered perhaps in the process of transmission, or adapted for liturgical use by modifications and additions. Others may have been selected as bearing, more or less, upon the events with which they are connected. Others again may have been composed with the intention of illustrating episodes in the life of David. The latter view is sometimes objected to as implying a fraud which is incompatible with inspiration. But the objection rests upon a narrow view of inspiration. Why may not God have used and directed the faculty of poetic imagination, in order to enable us better to understand some particular incident, and more fully to realise the lessons contained in it?

In studying these Psalms it must be remembered that they have a history. The possibility that they no longer lie before us in their original form must be taken into account. Other changes beside the substitution of *Elohim* for *Jehovah* may have been made by the editor, or may have crept in by accident in the process of transmission. This is

not mere theory. We see what has actually happened in the case of Ps. liii.

Ps. li is assigned by its title to that crisis in David's life when Nathan awoke his slumbering conscience to recognise his guilt in the matter of Bath-sheba (2 Sam. xii). It is then a commentary upon David's confession, "I have sinned against Jehovah," and Nathan's assurance, "Jehovah also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." It has generally been thought to contain David's first heart-felt prayer for pardon, while Ps. xxxii, written after some interval, when he had had time to ponder upon the past, records his experience for the warning and instruction of others, in accordance with the resolution of li. 13.

Its general appropriateness cannot be denied. Where, save in a character like that of David, uniting the strongest contrasts, capable of the highest virtue and the lowest fall, could we find such a combination of the deepest guilt with the most profound penitence? David had been endowed with the spirit of Jehovah (1 Sam. xvi. 13; 2 Sam. xxiii. 2); he had received the promise that his house should be established for ever before Jehovah (2 Sam. vii. 15, 16). Might he not well fear lest the fate of Saul should be his fate; lest, like Saul, he should be deprived of the spirit of God and deposed from his high position of privilege? But it was just this capacity for repentance and trust in the abundance of God's mercy which distinguished him from Saul, and made it possible for him with all his faults to be called "the man after God's own heart." Comp. the well-known passage in Carlyle's *Heroes*, p. 43.

The Davidic authorship of the Psalm has however been denied by many critics, chiefly upon the following grounds.

(1) The last two verses imply that Jerusalem was in ruins and that sacrificial worship was suspended. If these verses were part of the original Psalm, they would certainly point to a date in the Exile or in some period of distress such as that which preceded the mission of Nehemiah. It has indeed been maintained that they can be understood as a prayer of David that the still unfinished fortifications of Jerusalem (cp. 1 Kings iii. 1) may be carried to a successful completion; or, in figurative language, that his kingdom may not suffer for his sin. But the explanation is unsatisfactory. A comparison of similar expressions in lxix. 35; cii. 16; cxlvii. 2, makes it almost certain that the words are a prayer for the restoration of Jerusalem and the reestablishment of sacrificial worship there. These verses however do not appear to be an original part of the Psalm. It is indeed argued that "the omission of these verses makes the Psalm end abruptly": but the abruptness, if it exists, is far less startling than the termination of a Psalm of such surpassing spirituality with the hope of the restoration of material sacrifices. *v.* 17 forms a conclusion which, if abrupt, is in harmony with the spirit of the Psalm: *v.* 19 does not. In fact the contrast, if not actual contradiction, between *v.* 19 and *vv.* 16, 17 makes it difficult to suppose that they can have been written by the same poet at the same time. Moreover while *vv.* 1—17 are, at least in expression, strictly individual, *v.* 19 introduces the people generally ("they shall offer"). These verses then must be excluded in the consideration of the date of the Psalm, as in all probability a later addition.

(2) But further it is urged that the words of *v.* 4, "against thee, thee only, have I sinned," are inapplicable to David's situation, for "however great David's sin against God, he had done Uriah the most burning wrong that could be imagined; and an injury to a neighbour is in the O.T. a 'sin' against him, Gen. xx. 9; Jud. xi. 27; Jer. xxxvii. 18" (Driver, *Introd. to Lit. of O.T.* p. 367). But surely it is a mistake to demand logical accuracy in words of intense emotion. What is meant is that "the other aspects of his deed—its heinous criminality as a wrong done to a fellow-man—disappeared for the time, while he contemplated it as a sin against his infinitely gracious Benefactor." (Kay.) Moreover if the words are inapplicable to David, to whom can they apply? The Psalmist confesses himself blood-guilty (*v.* 14), and whether the expression refers to actual murder or only to 'mortal sins,' it must refer in the main to offences against man not God. See Ezek. xviii. 10—13.

(3) Of more weight against the Davidic authorship is the consideration that the closest parallels of thought and language are to be found in the later chapters of Isaiah, in particular in the national confession of guilt in Is. lxiii. 7—lxiv. and that the language appears to belong to a later and more developed stage of the religious consciousness. Cp. *v.* 1 with Is. lxiii. 7; *v.* 3 with Is. lix. 12; *v.* 9 with Is. xliii. 25; xliv. 22; *v.* 11 *b* with Is. lxiii. 10, 11; *v.* 17 with Is. lvii. 15; lxi. 1; lxvi. 2. The precariousness of this argument is obvious, and the weight attached to it will depend largely upon the view taken of the whole course of the growth of religious ideas in Israel, but it cannot be disregarded.

It must then be taken into account as at least a possibility that the Psalm was written by some deeply devout prophet of the Exile, perhaps even the author of the later chapters of Isaiah, and placed in the mouth of David, to illustrate an episode in his life which presented the most signal instance in history of the fall, repentance, and pardon, of a good and great man: written by inspiration of God to supply to all ages the most profound type of confession, and the most comforting assurance, based upon the experience of David, that God's mercy to the penitent knows no limit.

By many critics the Psalm is regarded as the utterance not of an individual but of the *nation*. This view is as old as Theodore of Mopsuestia (A.D. 428) who refers it to Israel in Babylon, confessing its sins and praying for forgiveness and restoration from exile, and it has recently been maintained by Robertson Smith (*O. T. in Jewish Church*, 2nd ed., p. 440) and Driver (*Introd.* p. 367), who place it in the Exile, and by Cheyne (*Origin of the Psalter*, p. 162; *Aids to the Devout Study of Criticism*, pp. 164 ff.), who places it later, between the Restoration and Nehemiah. "The situation of the Psalm," writes Robertson Smith, "does not necessarily presuppose such a case as David's. It is equally applicable to the prophet, labouring under a deep sense that he has discharged his calling inadequately and may have the guilt of lost lives upon his head (Ezek. xxxiii), or to collective Israel in the Captivity, when, according to the prophets, it was the guilt of blood equally with the guilt of idolatry that removed God's favour from His land (Jer. vii. 6; Hos. iv. 2, vi. 8; Is. iv. 4). Nay, from the Old Testament point of view, in which the experience of wrath and forgiveness stands generally

in such immediate relation to Jehovah's actual dealings with the nation, the whole thought of the Psalm is most simply understood as a prayer for the restoration and sanctification of Israel in the mouth of a prophet of the Exile...perhaps of the very prophet who wrote the last chapters of the Book of Isaiah."

Such a view will not appear impossible to anyone who compares the personification of Israel as the Servant of Jehovah in Is. xl. ff; and the addition of *vv.* 18, 19 points to the use of the Psalm by Israel in exile as the fitting expression of its feelings. But it is difficult to resist the impression that the Psalm is personal rather than national in its original and primary intention.

Its authorship and date and original intention are however questions of minor importance, compared with its profound appropriateness as the voice of the penitent soul in all ages. One generation after another has found by experience that its words "fit into every fold of the human heart," and supply them with language which the revelation of the Gospel has not superseded, but only deepened in meaning. If any proof of its inspiration is needed, it is to be found here (Rom. viii. 26). In true repentance, says Luther, a knowledge of sin and a knowledge of grace must combine: it is this double knowledge which inspires this Psalm, and is revealed in a clearer light in Jesus Christ.

A strange testimony to its power is given in the story that Voltaire began to parody it, but when he reached *v.* 10 was so overcome with alarm that he desisted from his profane attempt.

It is the fourth of the seven Psalms known from ancient times in the Christian Church as the 'Penitential Psalms' (vi, xxxii, xxxviii, li, cii, cxxx, cxliii). According to some Jewish rituals it is recited on the Day of Atonement; and it is appointed for use in the Commination Service on Ash Wednesday.

There is no clearly marked strophical arrangement in the Psalm, but (*vv.* 18, 19 being regarded as an addition outside the scheme of the Ps.) it falls into four stanzas, each, with the exception of the fourth, consisting of two pairs of verses.

i. The Psalmist prays for pardon and cleansing, confessing the greatness of his sins (1—4).

ii. In utter self-abasement he contrasts the corruption of his nature with the sincerity which God desires, and expresses his confident assurance that God can and will cleanse and gladden him (5—8).

iii. Repeating his petition for pardon, he supplicates for inward renewal and for the continuance of God's favour and support (9—12).

iv. He resolves to employ his regained freedom in grateful service, and to express his thanksgiving by that sacrifice of the heart which God most desires (13—17).

v. A prayer of the congregation in exile that Jerusalem may be rebuilt and the sacrificial worship reestablished, as a visible proof of the restoration of God's favour (18, 19).

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba.

51 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness:
According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.
2 Wash me throughly from mine iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.

1—4. Prayer for forgiveness and cleansing: its ground, God's grace; its condition, man's repentance.

1. *Have mercy upon me*] Or, Be gracious unto me, as the word is rendered in 2 Sam. xii. 22. It suggests the free bestowal of favour rather than the exercise of forgiving clemency, and is connected with the word rendered *gracious* in Ex. xxxiv. 6. Cp. Ps. iv. 1; lvi. 1; lvii. 1.

thy lovingkindness] The origin and the bond of the covenant between Jehovah and Israel.

according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies] Or, according to the abundance of thy compassions. Cp. xxv. 6; Is. lxiii. 7; Lam. iii. 32; 1 Pet. i. 3.

The prayer for pardon is thus based upon God's revelation of His character as "a God full of compassion and gracious, abundant in lovingkindness and truth; keeping lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty" (Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7); —a passage which seems to have supplied the Psalmist's language. Cp. lxxxvi. 15; Joel ii. 13.

Sin is described, as in Ex. xxxiv. 7 (cp. Ps. xxxii. 1, 2), in three different aspects, as *transgression*, *iniquity*, *sin*: the Heb. words thus rendered meaning respectively, (1) defection from God or rebellion against Him: (2) the perversion of right, depravity of conduct: (3) error, wandering from the right way, missing the mark in life.

The removal of guilt is also triply described. (1) *Blot out* (cp. *v.* 9): sin is regarded as a debt recorded in God's book which needs to be erased and cancelled (cp. the use of the word in Ex. xxxii. 32; Num. v. 23; and see note on Ps. xxxii. 2): or the word may be used more generally (*wipe out*) of cleansing away defilement so that no trace of it remains (2 Kings xxi. 13). Cp. the promise in Is. xliii. 25; xliv. 22; and also Neh. iv. 5; Jer. xviii. 23. (2) *Wash me*: the word means properly to wash clothes, as a fuller does (LXX correctly, πλῦνον, cp. Rev. vii. 14; xxii. 14), and is frequently used of ceremonial purifications (Ex. xix. 10, 14, &c.): here it denotes that inward cleansing of which external washings were the type. Cp. Jer. ii. 22; iv. 14. He prays, 'wash me *thoroughly*,' or, *abundantly*, for "the depth of his guilt demands an unwonted and special grace." But if transgressions abound (Lam. i. 5), so does mercy. (3) *Cleanse me* (cp. *be clean*, *v.* 7); like *wash*, a common term in the Levitical ritual, especially in the laws concerning leprosy, meaning sometimes *to cleanse*, sometimes *to pronounce clean*. This use

For I acknowledge my transgressions:
And my sin *is* ever before me.
Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,
And done *this* evil in thy sight:
That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest,
And be clear when thou judgest.

of it suggests the comparison of sin with leprosy. Cp. Lev. xiii. 6, 34, &c.; 2 Kings v. 10, 12, 13, 14.

3. *For I acknowledge*] Lit., *I know*. The pronoun is emphatic. His sins have all along been known to God. They are before His eyes (xc 8). But now he has come to know them himself; they are unceasingly present to his conscience. Such consciousness of sin is the first step towards the repentance and confession which are the indispensable conditions of forgiveness. David refused to acknowledge his sin to himself and to God—yet not, apparently, without sharp pangs of remorse, see xxxii. 3, 4—until Nathan's message awoke his conscience. Cp. the confession of the nation in Is. lix. 12.

4. David's confession to Nathan was couched in the simple words (two only in the Heb.), "I have sinned against Jehovah." The additional words "thee only" have been taken as a proof that the Psalm cannot have been written by David. But they need not, as we have seen already, be pressed with such extreme logical precision as to exclude sin against man. All sin, even that by which man is most grievously injured, is, in its ultimate nature, sin against God, as a breach of His holy law; just as man's duty to his fellow man is based upon his duty to God and is regarded as part of it. Moreover the king, as Jehovah's representative, was in an especial and peculiar way responsible to Him.

and done this evil] Better as R.V., **and done that which is evil in thy sight.** Cp. 2 Sam. xi. 27, "the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of Jehovah": and xii. 9, "Wherefore hast thou despised the word of Jehovah, to do that which is evil in his sight?"

that thou mightest &c.] Better, **that thou mayest be justified when thou givest sentence**: i.e., that Thy righteousness and holiness may be declared and vindicated when Thou dost pronounce sentence on my sin. *When thou speakest* is shewn by the parallelism to mean, 'when Thou dost pronounce sentence.' *Be justified* corresponds to the cardinal divine attribute of righteousness: *be clear* to that of holiness. Cp. Is. v. 16, "God the Holy One proves Himself holy in righteousness."

But this is a hard saying. Can it be meant that the vindication of God's holiness is the object of man's sin? (1) Grammar forbids us to relieve the difficulty by rendering *so that thou art justified* (consequence) instead of *in order that thou mayest be justified* (purpose). (2) We might regard *that* as depending upon *vv.* 3, 4 *a* taken together, and introducing the object of the Psalmist's confession. 'I confess my sin, that thou mayest be justified in pronouncing sentence upon me.'

5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity;

The sinner's confession and self condemnation is a justification of God's sentence upon sin, just as, conversely, the sinner's self justification is a challenge and impugnment of God's justice (Josh. vii. 19; Job xl. 8; 1 John i. 10). (3) Probably however we are meant to understand that man's sin brings out into a clearer light the justice and holiness of God, Who pronounces sentence upon it. The Psalmist flings himself at the footstool of the Divine justice. The consequence of his sin, and therefore in a sense its purpose (for nothing is independent of the sovereign Will of God), is to enhance before men the justice and holiness of God, the absolutely Righteous and Pure. "The Biblical writers drew no sharp accurate line between events as the consequence of the Divine order, and events as following from the Divine purpose. To them all was ordained and designed of God. Even sin itself in all its manifestations, though the whole guilt of it rested with man, and not how uncontrolled, but only in channels hewn for it by God, and to subserve His purposes....We must not expect that the Hebrew mind...altogether averse from philosophical speculation, should have exactly defined for itself the distinction between an action viewed as the *cause* of another, and the same action viewed as the *end*, of another action. The mind which holds the simple fundamental truth that all is of God, may also hold, almost as a matter of course, that all is *designed* of God" (Bishop Perowne). In this connexion passages such as 2 Sam. xxiv. 1; Is. vi. 10, lxiii. 17; Jud. ix. 23; 1 Sam. xvi. 14, xviii. 10, xix. 9; 1 Kings xxii. 21, require careful consideration.

Such a view is obviously liable to misconstruction, as though, if sin is in any sense treated as part of the divine purpose, and redounding to God's glory, it must cease to be sinful, and there must be an end of human responsibility. But the O.T. firmly maintains the truth of man's responsibility: and St Paul, in applying the words of this verse to the course of Israel's history (Rom. iii. 4) rebuts as the suggestion of an unhealthy conscience the notion that God is responsible for sin, which He overrules to His glory.

The quotation in Rom. iii. 4 is from the LXX, in which the Heb. word for *be clear* is taken in its Aramaic sense, *be victorious, prevail*, and the last word (*when thou judgest*) is ambiguously rendered. The Greek word may be passive, *when thou art judged* (as P.B.V., derived from LXX through the Vulg., and A.V. in Rom.), i.e. when Thy justice is challenged: but more probably it is middle, 'when Thou comest into judgement.' So R.V. in Rom. Cp. Jer. ii. 9 (LXX); Matt. v. 40.

5–8. He has inherited a sinful nature; and yet, so he is confident, God can and will make it conform to His desire. The emphatic 'Behold!' marks the beginning of a new stanza.

5. *Behold, I was shapen*] Better, Behold, I was born. Acts of sin have their root in the inherited sinfulness of mankind. It does not appear, as some have thought, that the Psalmist pleads the sinfulness of his nature as an excuse for his actual sins. Rather, in utter self-abasement, he feels compelled to confess and bewail not only his actual sins,

And in sin did my mother conceive me.
Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: 6
And in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: 7
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

but the deep infection of his whole nature (Job xiv. 4; Rom. vii. 18). Moreover this verse forms the introduction to *v.* 6, which, as the repetition of 'behold' indicates (cp. Is. lv. 4 f; liv. 15 f), stands in close connexion and correlation with it. He contrasts his natural perversity and liability to error with the inward truth and wisdom which God desires, and which, he is confident, God can communicate to the pardoned and regenerate soul.

6. *truth in the inward parts*] In the most secret springs of thought and will, unseen by man but known to God, He desires *truth*, perfect sincerity, whole-hearted devotion, incapable of deluding self, as David had done, or deceiving man, as he had endeavoured to do by his attempts to cover his sin and its consequences, or dissembling with God, as in his infatuation he had imagined to be possible. Correlative to the *truth* which God desires is *wisdom*, which is His gift, the spiritual discernment which is synonymous with the fear of Jehovah, and is the practical principle of right conduct. Cp. Prov. i. 7, ix. 10; Job xxviii. 28; James iii. 17.

7, 8. The verbs in these verses may be regarded as optatives (*mayest thou purge me*), but it is preferable to render them as futures: **Thou shalt purge me...thou shalt wash me...thou shalt make me hear.** They thus give utterance to the Psalmist's faith that God can and will cleanse and restore him. In *vv.* 9 ff direct prayer is resumed by the imperative, as in *vv.* 1, 2.

The figurative language is borrowed from the ceremonial of the law. A bunch of hyssop, some common herb which grew upon walls (Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 455), was used as a sprinkler, especially in the rites for cleansing the leper and purifying the unclean. (Ex. xii. 22; Lev. xiv. 4 ff; Num. xix. 6 ff, 18 ff; Hebr. ix. 19.) Washing of the person and clothes regularly formed part of the rites of purification. The Psalmist is of course thinking of the inward and spiritual cleansing of which those outward rites were the symbol. He appeals to God Himself to perform the office of the priest and cleanse him from his defilement.

whiter than snow] Cp. Is. i. 18, where this natural emblem of purity is contrasted with the scarlet of sin, suggested by the stains of blood upon the hands (*v.* 15). Terms usually applied to garments (*v.* 2 note) are transferred to the person. Cp. Rev. iii. 4, 5, iv. 4; &c.

It is unnecessary to follow the Syr. in reading *thou shalt satisfy me with joy* (xc. 14) for *thou shalt make me hear joy*, though the change would be a simple one. The language is still borrowed from the law.

8 Make me to hear joy and gladness;
That the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice.
9 Hide thy face from my sins,
And blot out all mine iniquities.
10 Create in me a clean heart, O God;
And renew a right spirit within me.
11 Cast me not away from thy presence;
And take not thy holy Spirit from me.

As the purification of the unclean was the prelude to his readmission to the gladness of the worship of the sanctuary (ii. 4), so the cleansing of the Psalmist's heart will be the prelude to his restoration to that 'joy of God's salvation' (*v.* 12), which he desires.

the bones which thou hast broken] For the sense of God's displeasure had as it were crushed and shattered his whole frame. See note on xlii. 10, and cp. xxxii. 3.

9—12. Repeated prayer for pardon, cleansing, and renewal. The change from the future to the imperative (see above) indicates that a fresh division of the Ps. begins here.

9. *Hide thy face from my sins*] Cease to gaze upon them in displeasure. Cp. xxxii. 1; xc. 8. This use of the expression is unusual. Generally God is said to hide His face when He withdraws His favour (xiii. 1; xliv. 24, &c.).

blot out] See note on *v.* 1.

10. *Create in me*] Rather, **Create me**, i.e. for me. The word is used of the creative operation of God, bringing into being what did not exist before: and so in the parallel line *renew* should be rather **make new** (Vulg. *innova* better than Jer. *renovat*). It is not the restoration of what was there before that he desires, but a radical change of heart and spirit. *A right spirit* should rather be **a stedfast** or **constant spirit** (lvii. 7; lxxviii. 37; cxii. 7), fixed and resolute in its allegiance to God, unmoved by the assaults of temptation. Such a clean heart and stedfast spirit, the condition of fellowship with God (Matt. v. 8), the spring of a holy life, can only come from the creative, life-giving power of God. Cp. the prophetic promises in Jer. xxiv. 7: xxxi. 33; xxxii. 39: Ezek. xi. 19; xviii. 31; xxxvi. 26; and see 2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 15; Eph. ii. 10; iv. 24.

11. The upright "behold God's face" (xi. 7): He admits them to His presence for ever (xli. 12). The spirit of Jehovah came upon David, as it departed from Saul (1 Sam. xvi. 13, 14). Did David fear that he might share the fate of Saul, banished from God's presence and deprived of His favour, deserted by that Spirit which is the source of all right desire and action?

It is pointed out by the advocates of the national interpretation of the Psalm that the phrase of the first line is always used of the rejection of the nation and its banishment from the holy land (2 Kings xiii. 23; xvii. 20; xxiv. 20; Jer. vii. 15): and that the phrase 'God's holy spirit' is

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation;
And uphold me *with thy* free spirit.
Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; 13
And sinners shall be converted unto thee.
Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my 14
salvation:
And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

found elsewhere in the O.T. only in Is. lxiii. 10, 11, where it is mentioned (along with 'the angel of His presence' *v.* 9) as the mediator of His presence in the midst of the nation of Israel. But both phrases are equally applicable to the individual.

Although the doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit is not taught in the O.T., passages like these, which imply that in the spirit Jehovah personally acts, prepare the way for the N.T. revelation concerning Him, and can be used in the fullest Christian sense. See Oehler's *O.T. Theol.*, § 65.

12. *Restore* &c.] For sin has destroyed that assurance of God's help which is ever a ground of rejoicing (ix. 14; xiii. 5; xx. 5; xxxv. 9). He prays for that deliverance which he is confident (*v.* 8) that God can and will grant him.

with thy *free spirit*] Rather, with a free, or, willing spirit. Cp. Exod. xxxv. 5, 22; and the cognate word in liv. 6, 'a *freewill* offering.' He desires to be upheld from falling by such a divine inspiration as will move him spontaneously to think and do such things as are right. His first impulse will be to shew forth his thankfulness in acts (*v.* 13).

13—17. Resolutions of thanksgiving.

13. Having experienced the joy of penitence and restoration, he will endeavour to instruct transgressors in the ways of Jehovah in which they have refused to walk (Is. xlii. 24), those commandments which they have refused to keep, so that they may return to Him from Whom they have gone astray. Ps. xxxii has been thought to be the fulfilment of this resolution. This resolve is however, it is said, "little appropriate to David, whose natural and right feeling in connexion with his great sin must rather have been that of silent humiliation than of an instant desire to preach his forgiveness to other sinners." But surely an endeavour to undo the evil effects of a sin whereby he "had given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme" would be one of the most fitting fruits of repentance.

14. *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness*] From the power and the punishment of my sin. Cp. xxxix. 8; xl. 12. No doubt 'bloodguiltiness' may include all 'mortal sin,' for which death was the punishment (see Ezek. xviii. 13; Ps. ix. 12, note); and the word is applicable enough to the nation which is repeatedly charged with the crime of murder (Is. i. 15; iv. 4; Jer. xix. 4; Ezek. vii. 23; 2 Kings xxiv. 3, 4; &c.); but it is distinctly appropriate to David's crimes of adultery and murder. Cp. 2 Sam. xii. 5, 13.

thy righteousness] God's righteousness, i.e. His faithfulness to His

15 O Lord, open thou my lips;
And my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.
16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*:
Thou delightest not in burnt offering.
17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit:
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion:
Build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

character and covenant, is exhibited in the pardon of the penitent not less than in the judgement of the impenitent. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9). Contrast Rom. ii. 4 ff.

15. *open thou*] Lit. as P.B.V., *thou shalt open*, i.e. when thou openest. Not the occasion for praise only, but the power to praise aright is the gift of God. Cp. xl. 3. In this verse and the preceding one there may be an allusion to the public worship of God. Cp. xxvi. 6, 7. He may be tacitly comparing himself to the leper who has been pronounced clean, and restored to that fellowship with the congregation from which he had been excluded.

16. *For thou desirest not sacrifice*] R.V., For thou delightest not in sacrifice. The verb is the same as in *vv.* 6, 19, and xl. 6. *For* gives the reason for the nature of the thank-offering which he proposes to offer:—not material sacrifice which God does not desire, but the sacrifice of a contrite heart. Cp. xl. 6, the sacrifice of obedience; l. 14, 23; the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

thou delightest not] R.V., thou hast no pleasure: a word used of accepting a sacrifice (cxix. 108; cp. xix. 14). For the sense in which God is said to have no pleasure in sacrifice, see Introd. to Ps. l. An absolute repudiation of all sacrificial worship cannot be intended.

17. *The sacrifices of God*] Such as He desires and approves.

A broken spirit and *a contrite heart* are those in which sorrow and affliction (*v.* 8) have done their work, and the obstinacy of pride has been replaced by the humility of penitence. Cp. xxxiv. 18; Is. lvii. 15.

The P.B.V. *a troubled spirit* follows the Vulg. *spiritus contribulatus*, but introduces a distinction which does not exist in the Heb.

thou wilt not despise] Though David had despised the word of the LORD (2 Sam. xii. 9), he is confident that God will not despise him. Cp. cii. 17; John vi. 37.

18, 19. Prayer of Israel in exile for the restoration of Jerusalem and the renewal of the Temple worship.

Reasons have already been given for thinking that these verses are not part of the original Psalm, but an addition by the exiles who adapted it to their own needs.

18. Cp. cii. 13 ff.

Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteous- 19
ness, with burnt offering and whole *burnt offering*:
Then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

19. *Then shalt thou be pleased with*] R.V., **Then shalt thou delight in, as in *v.* 16.**

the sacrifices of righteousness] Those offered in a right spirit. Cp. **iv. 5; Deut. xxxiii. 19.**

with burnt offering and whole burnt offering] R.V., **in burnt offering** &c. The term *'ôlâh*, 'burnt-offering,' denotes the sacrifice as 'ascending' in smoke and flame: *kâlîl*, 'whole burnt offering,' denotes the sacrifice as entirely consumed. It was the rule that the burnt offering should be wholly consumed, to symbolise the entire self-dedication of the worshipper; and the second designation is added in order to emphasise this idea of the sacrifice. Cp. Deut. xxxiii. 10; 1 Sam. vii. 9.

This anticipation of the restoration of material sacrifices in Jerusalem seems a poor ending to a Psalm of such profound spirituality. But a material Temple and visible sacrifices still had their work to do in forming a centre for the Jewish Church and serving as a visible sign of God's covenant with His people. Not until Christ had come and offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, could they be finally dispensed with, and the full truth of such words as those of this Psalm be understood.

PSALM LII.

The title prefixed to this Psalm ascribes it to David, and connects it with the occasion when Doeg informed Saul that David had been received by Ahimelech at Nob, and assisted with the means for his flight (1 Sam. xxi, xxii). The character denounced in the Psalm is in some respects such as we may suppose Doeg to have been. He was a man of wealth and importance as the chief of Saul's herdmen (or, according to the LXX, the keeper of his mules). His tongue was "a deceitful tongue," because although the facts he reported were true, he helped to confirm Saul in a false and cruel suspicion. It "devised destruction" and "loved all devouring words," for his story was told with malicious intent and fatal result. Just sufficient appropriateness may be traced to account for the title having been prefixed by the compiler of this division of the Psalter, or for the Psalm having been connected with the story of Doeg in some historical work from which the compiler took it.

But the entire absence of any reference to the cold-blooded and sacrilegious murder of the priests at Nob, in which Doeg acted as Saul's agent, when all his other officers shrank from executing his brutal order, makes it difficult, if not impossible, to suppose that the Psalm was really written by David on that occasion, unless we could assume that it was composed after Doeg's information was given but before the massacre was perpetrated, which is wholly improbable.

To judge from its contents, the Psalm is a denunciation of some wealthy and powerful noble, who had been guilty of ruining innocent persons by malicious slanders or false evidence. As reference is made to his wealth (*v.* 7), and his wrongdoing is contrasted with the lovingkindness of God, it seems probable that he was one of those magnates so frequently denounced by the prophets, who, in defiance of their duty of lovingkindness to their neighbours, enriched themselves by impoverishing the poor, and did not scruple to ruin their victims by the use of false evidence and the subservience of venal judges. See for example, Mic. ii. 1 ff; iii. 1 ff; vi. 12; vii. 3. The Psalmist speaks as the representative of the sufferers, who will rejoice at their oppressor's fall as a proof of God's righteous judgement.

As to the particular occasion and date of the Psalm little can be said. The evils to which it refers were rife in the eighth century, but they had existed before and continued to exist after. A couple of parallels in Jeremiah (xx. 1, 8) are insufficient to establish its dependence upon that book. Its author may have been a prophet. His tone of authority and vigorous denunciation of evil in high places recall Isaiah's denunciation of Shebna (Is. xxii. 15 ff), and, in a less degree, Jeremiah's denunciation of Pashhur (xx. 3 ff), and Hananiah (xxviii. 5 ff). Evidently it is directed against some conspicuous individual, and is not merely a general denunciation.

The Psalm falls into two divisions.

i. The unscrupulous evil-doer is called to account; his character is described; and his fate foretold (1—5).

ii. With awe the righteous contemplate his fall, and rejoice over the judgement of this self-confident braggart: while the Psalmist contrasts his own security under the protection of God, and makes vows of public thanksgiving (6—9).

To the chief Musician, Maschil, *A Psalm* of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.

52 Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty *man*?

On the title, **For the chief Musician, Maschil of David**, see *Introd.* pp. xix f. It is the first of four 'Maschil' Psalms.

1—5. Denunciation of the evil-doer and prediction of his fate.

1. This verse states the theme of the Psalm; the contrast between man's wrongdoing and God's lovingkindness. The two halves of the verse correspond to the two divisions of the Psalm. The statement of the second line is abruptly introduced, but it is virtually the answer to the question of the first. What avails it thee to boast of successful evil-doing (x. 3)? it is vain: **the lovingkindness of God (endureth) all the day**; that covenant love in which the Psalmist trusts (*v.* 8), and of which all His 'saints' (*v.* 9) are the object.

O mighty man] Perhaps simply, as P.B.V., *thou tyrant*, for power

The goodness of God *endureth* continually.
Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs;
Like a sharp rasor, working deceitfully.
Thou lovest evil more than good;
And lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah.
Thou lovest all devouring words,
O thou deceitful tongue.
God shall likewise destroy thee for ever,

soon degenerates into tyranny: but rather perhaps with sarcastic irony, *thou hero!* Cp. Is. v. 22; Jer. ix. 3.

God] *El*, 'the strong one' (cp. l. 1), is significantly used here. The braggart tyrant thinks himself strong, but there is a stronger than he, who will call him to account.

2. *Thy tongue deviseth*] Cp. xxxv. 20. Sins of the tongue—falsehood, slander, false witness, and the like—are frequently denounced in the Psalms and by the Prophets. See v. 9; x. 7; xii. 2 ff; Mic. vi. 12; Jer. ix. 3: &c.

mischiefs] R.V., very wickedness (as in v. 9); or *destruction*, perhaps not without a reminiscence of the original meaning of the word, *a yawning gulf*, for his tongue is ready to swallow up (*v.* 4) the righteous. The plur. denotes mischief or destructiveness of every kind.

like a sharp rasor] Lit., *like a whetted rasor*, which cuts you before you are aware, as you handle it incautiously. The tongue and its words are elsewhere compared to swords and spears and arrows (lv. 21, lvii. 4, lix. 7, lxiv. 3; cp. Prov. xxvi. 18). Comp. Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, iii. 4,

"'Tis slander,
Whose edge is sharper than the sword."

working deceitfully] The partic. cannot, unless we assume a laxity of construction, be in agreement with *thy tongue;* nor can it well be referred to the *sharp rasor*. It is best to take it as a vocative, **O thou worker of deceit.** Cp. ci. 7.

3. *evil more than good*] Evil rather than good, evil and not good. The meaning is not merely that he has a preference for evil, but that he chooses evil instead of good, like the nobles censured in Mic. iii. 2, "who hate the good and love the evil."

righteousness] Not merely truth, but truth regarded as promoting and securing justice. The aim and result of his falsehoods was injustice.

4. *devouring words*] Lit., *words of swallowing up*. Cp. the use of the verb in xxxv. 25, "We have swallowed him up": and liii. 4.

O thou deceitful tongue] This rendering is certainly preferable to that of the margin, 'and *the deceitful tongue*.' The bold identification of the offender with the offending member is far more vigorous, and perfectly legitimate. Cp. cxx. 2, 3; xii. 3; 1 Kings xix. 18.

5. *likewise*] We might have expected *therefore*, as P. B. V. following Vulg. loosely renders: but *likewise* is significant. There is a corre-

He shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of *thy* dwelling place,
And root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.
6 The righteous also shall see, and fear,
And shall laugh at him:

spondence and equivalence between the sin and its punishment. Cp. Mic. ii. 1—10, where the idea is worked out that the heartless oppressors who have driven the poor from their homes will be driven from the land into exile.

The doom of the wicked man is forcibly described by various figures. He fancies himself securely intrenched in the fortress of his wealth, but God will *break him down* (Jud. viii. 9) and that *for ever*, so that there will be no restoration of the ruins. He is at ease in his home, but God will take him as a man takes a coal from the hearth with tongs or shovel, and plucking him out of his dwelling, drive him forth as a homeless wanderer (Deut. xxviii. 63; Prov. ii. 22; Job xviii. 14, R.V.). He is "spreading himself like a green tree in its native soil" (xxxvii. 35), but God will uproot him out of the land of the living. Cp. for the phrase Jer. xi. 19; and note the contrast between the fate of the wicked and the future of the Psalmist (*v.* 8).

The verbs in this verse might be rendered as in the LXX. as a prayer, "May God destroy thee" &c.; but the rendering in the future is preferable. Sentence is pronounced in a tone of prophetic authority. Cp. Is. xxii. 17 ff.

Selah marks the conclusion of the first part of the Psalm.

6—9. The sight of his fall inspires the righteous with awe, and gives occasion for rejoicing at this proof of God's just government of the world, for trustful hope, and grateful thanksgiving.

6, 7. And the righteous shall see, and fear,
And shall laugh at him, (saying),
Lo, &c.

The first impression produced by the sight is that of *fear;* not alarm, but awe; a deeper reverence for God and His government of the world: the next impression that of scorn and derision (ii. 4) for the braggart who trusted in his wealth. Such rejoicing is no mere vindictive triumph at the wicked man's ruin. Malicious satisfaction at the calamity of the wicked is condemned in the O.T.; see Job xxxi. 29; Prov. xxiv. 17. But inasmuch as the judgement of the wicked is an illustration and proof of the government of God, it must be welcomed with joy by the righteous. Cp. Rev. xviii. 20; xix. 1 ff. It must be remembered moreover that the apparently unchecked prosperity of the wicked was a sore trial of faith to those whose view of God's working was limited to this world. They naturally and rightly desired a vindication of His righteousness, and rejoiced when they saw it. See further *Introd.* pp. lxxxviii ff, and cp. lviii. 10 f; lxiv. 7 ff; v. 11, note.

Lo, *this is* the man *that* made not God his strength;
But trusted in the abundance of his riches,
And strengthened himself in his wickedness.
But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God:
I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.
I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done *it*:
And I will wait on thy name; for *it is* good before thy saints.

7. The words of the righteous. There is a touch of sarcasm in the use of the word *geber* (akin to *gibbor*, v. 1) for *man* (as perhaps in Is. xxii. 17, see R.V. marg.), denoting a man in his full vigour.

that made not God his strength] Or, *strengthold*. The tense implies that it was the constant habit of his mind.

but trusted &c.] Cp. xlix. 6.

in his wickedness] The singular of the word rendered *mischiefs* (R.V. *very act of evil*) in v. 2. It may here mean *greed*, or *covetousness*. But the rendering of the Targ. and the Syr. *in his wealth* (whence A.V. marg. *substance*), seems to represent a slightly different reading, which agrees well with the parallel, *in the abundance of his riches*.

8. *But I am like a green olive tree*] R.V., But as for me, I am like a green olive tree, rightly emphasising the contrast between the fate of the wicked man and the hopes of the speaker. But who is the speaker? Is it, as is commonly supposed, the Psalmist? or is the speech of the righteous in v. 7 continued, but with a transition to the singular, in order more forcibly to express the personal faith of each individual? It makes little difference to the sense: the Psalmist, if he is the speaker, speaks as the representative of the righteous.

like a green olive tree in the house of God] It is possible (cp. xcii. 13) that trees grew in the temple courts, as they grow at the present day in the Haram area, and that he compares his prosperity and security to that of the carefully tended trees planted in sacred ground. But more probably two figures are combined. He is like an evergreen olive tree, while the wicked man is rooted up: he is God's guest, enjoying His favour and protection. For the metaphor of the tree cp. Jer. xi. 16; Hos. xiv. 8 (of the nation); Ps. i. 3; xcii. 12 ff: and for that of the guest see xxiii. 6; xxvii. 4; xv. 1. Note too that God's house may mean the land of Israel (Hos. ix. 15), in which the righteous dwells securely while the wicked man is driven out of it (*v.* 5).

mercy] Rather, lovingkindness, as in *v.* 1.

9. *I will praise thee*] R.V., I will give thee thanks, "the sacrifice of thanksgiving," l. 23.

because thou hast done it] For this emphatic absolute use of the verb cp. xxii. 31; xxxvii. 5.

I will wait &c.] R.V., I will wait on thy name, for it is good, in the presence of thy saints. Cp. Is. xxvi. 8. But 'in the presence of thy saints' implies some *public* act of praise (cp. xxii. 25; liv. 6); and it is probable that for *wait* some word meaning *proclaim* should

be read, thus: *I will proclaim that thy name is good in the presence of thy saints*. God's *chasidim*, 'saints' or 'godly ones', are those who are the object of His *chesĕd* or lovingkindness. Cp. l. 5; and Appendix, Note 1.

PSALM LIII.

This Psalm is another recension of Ps. xiv. *Elohim* (God), is substituted for *Jehovah* (A.V. Lord) in accordance with the usage of this book; and in *vv.* 1—4, 6 there are a few variations which hardly affect the sense; but *v.* 5 differs widely from the corresponding *vv.* 5, 6 of Ps. xiv. It is a disputed question whether this difference is due to corruption of the text or to intentional change. On the one hand the curious similarity of the Hebrew letters is in favour of the view that the text here is a conjectural restoration of characters which had become partially obliterated: but on the other hand it is possible that some later editor intentionally altered the original text in order to adapt the Psalm to his purpose by introducing a fresh historical reference, probably, as we shall see, to the destruction of Sennacherib's army.

At first sight *v.* 6 seems to bring the date of the Psalm down to the Exile. It might be a liturgical addition made in the time of the Exile, but even if this is not the case (and the occurrence of the verse in both recensions points to its being an original part of the Psalm) its language, as will be shewn in the notes, is not decisive.

The Psalmist traces the deep and universal corruption of mankind to its source in their failure to seek after God (1—3). He illustrates this corruption by the cruel treatment to which 'the people of Jehovah' have been subjected; and points to some signal interposition by which Jehovah has proved His care for them and refuted the denial of His Providence (4, 5). The Psalm concludes with a prayer that He will gladden Israel with a full deliverance (*v.* 6).

It is commonly supposed that the Psalmist is describing the depravity of his own age and his own country. But at least in *vv.* 1—3 it is of mankind at large (*the sons of men*, *v.* 2) that he is speaking. His words recall the great examples of corruption in the primeval world, in the days before the Flood, at Babel, in Sodom: and in this recension at any rate, it is clear that 'my people' in *v.* 4 must mean the nation of Israel, and not the poor but godly folk within the nation, while the 'workers of iniquity' must mean foreign invaders, not tyrannical Israelite magnates, for *v.* 5 can refer to nothing less than some great national deliverance from a foreign enemy. In the notes on Ps. xiv the view is taken that *vv.* 4, 5 were originally meant to refer to the oppression of Israel in Egypt and the deliverance at the Red Sea, as a great typical instance of defiant antagonism to Jehovah and of His intervention on behalf of His people; and they seem to have been remodelled here to introduce a reference to the invasion of Judah by the Assyrians and the miraculous destruction of Sennacherib's host.

To the chief Musician upon Mahalath, Maschil, *A Psalm* of David.

The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. 53
Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity:
There is none that doeth good.
God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, 2
To see if there were *any* that did understand, that did
seek God.

The title runs: **For the chief Musician: set to Mahalath. Maschil of David.** *Mahalath* (cp. the title of Ps. lxxxviii) may mean *sickness*, and is best explained as the initial word of some well-known song, to the melody of which the Psalm was set; rather than as denoting a mournful style of music or some kind of instrument. The LXX could only transliterate the word as unintelligible.

1—3. The universal depravity of mankind, and its cause.

1. *The fool*] A class of men, not a particular individual. The word *nâbâl* here used for fool denotes moral perversity, not mere ignorance or weakness of reason. 'Folly' is the opposite of 'wisdom' in its highest sense. It may be predicated of forgetfulness of God or impious opposition to His will (Deut. xxxii. 6, 21; Job ii. 10; xlii. 8; Ps. lxxiv. 18, 22): of gross offences against morality (2 Sam. xiii. 12, 13): of sacrilege (Josh. vii. 15): of ungenerous churlishness (1 Sam. xxv. 25). For a description of the 'fool' in his 'folly' see Is. xxxii. 5, 6 (A.V. *vile person, villany*).

hath said in his heart] Or, **said.** This was the deliberate conclusion of men, upon which they acted. Cp. x. 6, 11, 13.

There is *no God*] Cp. x. 4. This is not to be understood of a speculative denial of the existence of God; but of a practical denial of His moral government. It is rightly paraphrased by the Targum on xiv. 1, 'There is no government of God in the earth.' Cp. lxxiii. 11; Jer. v. 12; Zeph. i. 12; Rom. i. 28 ff.

Corrupt are they &c.] Render, **They did corrupt and abominable iniquity; there was none doing good.** The subject of the sentence is mankind in general. Abandoning a practical belief in God, they depraved their nature, and gave themselves up to practices which God abhors (v. 6). 'Corrupt' describes the self-degradation of their better nature; 'abominable' the character of their conduct in the sight of God. Such was the condition of the world before the Flood. See Gen. vi. 11, 12; and with the last line of the verse cp. Gen. vi. 5. Rom. i. 18—32 is a commentary on this verse. Men "refused to have God in their knowledge"..."their senseless heart was darkened"... "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." For *iniquity* Ps. xiv reads *doings*.

2. For a while God as it were overlooked the growing corruption. At length He 'looked down' (xxxiii. 13, 14). So in the yet simpler language of the Pentateuch He is said to have 'come down to see' the wickedness of Babel and Sodom (Gen. xi. 5; xviii. 21; and note the

3 Every one of them is gone back, they are altogether become filthy;
There is none that doeth good, no, not one.
4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?
Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread:
They have not called upon God.

use of 'look down' in the latter narrative though in a different connexion, xviii. 16). Were not these typical examples of human corruption in the Psalmist's mind? God (in xiv. 2 Jehovah) looked down... to see if there were any that did understand (or *dealt wisely*, R.V. marg., for the verb often includes the idea of right action), **that did seek after God.** Cp. ix. 10. The use of *God*, not *Jehovah*, in Ps. xiv as well as here, is significant. It is of mankind in general, not of Israel, that the Psalmist is speaking. God made Himself known through the voice of conscience and in the works of creation, but men would not follow the light of conscience or read the book of nature. See Acts xiv. 17; xvii. 27; and especially Rom. i. 19 ff.

3. The result of His investigation. **Every one of them had gone back** (xliv. 18) from following God (in xiv. 3 *turned aside* from the path of right): **together had they become tainted**, a word which in Arabic means *to go bad* or *turn sour*, but in Heb. is used only in a moral sense, here and in Job xv. 16. On the interpolation in the P.B.V. of Ps. xiv after *v.* 3 see note there.

4, 5. The corruption of mankind exemplified in their treatment of God's people; and His Providence demonstrated in the deliverance of them.

4. God is the speaker. The first clause may be taken as in A.V., 'Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?' Are they so ignorant that they cannot distinguish between right and wrong? Cp. *v.* 2, and lxxxii. 5. But a much better connexion with *v.* 5 is gained by rendering, *Have not the workers of iniquity been made to know?* i.e. taught by sharp experience to recognise their error. Then *v.* 5 follows as an answer to the question, pointing to the plain white with the bones of Jerusalem's besiegers. For this pregnant sense of *know* cp. Hos. ix. 7; Jud. viii. 16 (*taught*, lit. *made to know*).

who eat up &c.] The A.V. follows the Ancient Versions in understanding this to mean, 'they devour my people as naturally as they take their daily food.' And this they do without regard to God (in Ps. xiv, Jehovah). Cp. for the phrase, Num. xiv. 9, "the people of the land are bread for us"; Num. xxiv. 8; and for the fact, Is. i. 7; Jer. x. 25; xxx. 16; Hab. iii. 14; Ps. lxxix. 7. The reference to national deliverance in the following verse excludes (at any rate in this recension of the Ps.) the explanation of 'my people' as the godly few in Israel (Mic. ii. 9; iii. 3, 5, and often in the prophets), and of 'the workers of iniquity' as the nobles who impoverished them by unjust extortions (Mic. iii. 1 ff; Is. iii. 14 f; Prov. xxx. 14).

There were they in great fear, *where* no fear was: 5
For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth *against* thee:
Thou hast put *them* to shame, because God hath despised them.

O that the salvation of Israel *were come* out of Zion! 6
When God bringeth back the captivity of his people,
Jacob shall rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

5. *There* points to some signal instance in which panic terror and overwhelming calamity overtook the 'workers of iniquity' who came to devour the people of God. They were seized with a supernaturally inspired terror, where there was no natural cause for panic. Cp. 1 Sam. xiv. 15; 2 Kings vii. 6; xix. 7, 35.

for God hath scattered &c.] The bones of Israel's enemies lie bleaching on the plain, where their bodies were left unburied (Ezek. vi. 5). This cannot be an anticipation of some further defeat. It must rather be an allusion to some historic event; and it at once suggests the annihilation of Sennacherib's great army. Probably the text was intentionally altered in this recension in order to introduce a reference to the most famous example in later times of the discomfiture of worldly arrogance venturing to measure its strength with Jehovah.

against *thee*] The people of God are addressed.

thou hast put them *to shame*] Cp. 2 Kings xix. 20 ff.

hath despised them] R.V. *rejected them*, as the word is often rendered elsewhere. But *despised* better expresses the contempt for the enemies of His people which is meant. Cp. Jud. ix. 38; Is. xxxiii. 8. In their folly they said in their heart, 'There is no God' (cp. 2 Kings xviii. 35); and this catastrophe which they are powerless to avert is His answer to their blasphemy. Cp. ii. 4, 5. For the widely different reading of xiv. 5, 6 see notes there.

6. Concluding prayer for the full restoration of Israel. Some commentators have regarded this as a liturgical addition, but its presence in both recensions is in favour of its originality. It forms an appropriate conclusion to the Ps., and the recollection of past deliverance in *v.* 5 naturally passes into a prayer for further restoration.

the salvation of Israel] Lit. *salvations*, victory and deliverance full and complete. (Ps. xiv. 7 has the singular.) Zion is Jehovah's dwelling-place, the centre from which He exercises His earthly sovereignty.

when God bringeth back &c.] Or, as R.V. marg., *returneth to the captivity* &c. For *God* Ps. xiv. 7 has *Jehovah*. At first sight these words seem to fix the date of the Psalm in the period of the Exile (cxxvi. 1). Nor does the phrase *out of Zion* exclude such a view. The exiles turned to Zion even in her desolation (Dan. vi. 10; 1 Kings viii. 44), and from thence Jehovah might be expected to restore His people. But (1) it is very probable that the phrase rendered *bring back the cap-*

tivity means rather *turn the fortune*[1]. This meaning suits all the passages in which the phrase occurs, while *turn the captivity* does not, except in the figurative sense of *restoring prosperity*. See e.g. Job xlii. 10; Ezek. xvi. 53; Zeph. ii. 7. And (2) even if *turn the captivity* is the original meaning, the phrase is used by Amos (ix. 14) and Hosea (vi. 11) long before the Babylonian Captivity. In the time of Hezekiah the words might refer to the recent fall of the Northern Kingdom.

then shall Jacob rejoice] Properly a wish or prayer (cp. xiii. 5, 6): **let Jacob rejoice, and Israel be glad.**

PSALM LIV.

This Psalm consists of two divisions, separated by *Selah*.

i. A prayer for help in imminent peril from godless enemies (1—3).

ii. A profession of unshaken confidence that God will defend and avenge the Psalmist, with a vow of thanksgiving for the deliverance which he is well assured is in store for him (4—7).

The title refers the Psalm to the time of David's persecution by Saul. When David became aware that the men of Keilah, with selfish ingratitude, intended to surrender him to Saul, he fled with his men to the wilderness of Ziph, a district to the S.E. of Hebron. But the Ziphites "came up to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in the strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of the desert?" (1 Sam. xxiii. 19). Saul came down to seek David, who was in imminent peril of being surrounded and captured, when Saul was compelled to withdraw in order to repel a Philistine raid. On a subsequent occasion (unless the narrative in 1 Sam. xxvi. 1 ff is only another account of the same incident) the Ziphites repeated their treachery, and again betrayed David's hiding-place.

It is argued that this reference is excluded by the description of the Psalmist's enemies in *v.* 3 as 'strangers' and 'violent men,' terms elsewhere applied to foreign oppressors. This no doubt is the general meaning of the words; but it is difficult to say positively (see note) that they could not have been applied to Israelites. Otherwise the Psalm suits the occasion. If not written by David, it may have been placed in his mouth by some later Psalmist. But its language is so general, that no positive conclusion can be formed from its contents as to the particular circumstances under which it was composed.

The Psalm is a Proper Psalm for Good Friday.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil, *A Psalm* of David, when the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?

54 Save me, O God, by thy name,

The title may be rendered with R.V., **For the chief Musician; on stringed instruments. Maschil of David: when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?**

1. *by thy name*] God's name is the manifestation of His character,

[1] Lit. *turn a turning*, the word *sh'būth* being derived from *shūb* 'to turn' or 'return,' not from *shābāh*, 'to take captive.' The regular word for the Babylonian captivity is *gōlāh*, 'exile.'

And judge me by thy strength.
Hear my prayer, O God;
Give ear to the words of my mouth.
For strangers are risen up against me,
And oppressors seek after my soul:
They have not set God before them. Selah.
Behold, God *is* mine helper:

the sum of His revealed attributes. The Psalmist can appeal to it, for He has declared that it is His will to save those who put their trust in Him. Cp. v. 11.

judge me] Do me justice. Confident in the goodness of his cause, he is sure that if right is done him, he will be delivered. Cp. 1 Sam. xxiv. 15; Ps. vii. 8; ix. 4; xxvi. 1; xxxv. 24; xliii. 1.

by thy strength] R.V., in thy might. God has not only the will, but the power to deliver His servant. He is "a mighty one who will save" (Zeph. iii. 17).

3. This verse is repeated almost verbatim in Ps. lxxxvi. 14 (a mosaic constructed of fragments of other Psalms), with the change, accidental or intentional, of *strangers* into *proud*. The consonants of the Heb. words ZARĪM, *strangers*, and ZĒDĪM, *proud*, are almost identical, and some Heb. MSS. and the Targ. read ZEDĪM here; but the rest of the versions support the Massoretic Text.

and oppressors &c.] Render, and violent men have sought my life, as in 1 Sam. xxiii. 15, "David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life." It has been argued that the terms 'strangers' and 'violent men' are inapplicable to Israelites, and prove that the title is erroneous. No doubt they are often used of foreign invaders or oppressors (Is. xxv. 2 ff; xxix. 5; Ezek. xxxi. 12; cp. Is. i. 7; Ezek. vii. 21); but 'violent men' or 'terrible ones' is not exclusively so used (Job vi. 23; Jer. xv. 21), and might well be applied to Saul and his followers; while the Ziphites might be designated 'strangers,' in view of their unneighbourly behaviour. It is however possible that 'strangers' refers to the men of Keilah, whom there is some ground for regarding as Canaanites. The peculiar term 'lords' or 'owners' applied to the men of Keilah (1 Sam. xxiii. 11, 12) seems to have been specially (though not exclusively) used of Canaanites. See Josh. xxiv. 11; Judg. ix. 2 ff; and J. S. Black's note on the latter passage in the *Smaller Cambridge Bible for Schools*.

they have not set God before them] They have no regard for God's will, and no fear of His judgements. Cp. x. 4, 5; xxxvi. 1; and contrast xvi. 8; xviii. 22. Under other circumstances loyalty to Saul might have required the Ziphites to surrender David: as it was, they were simply fighting against God in making themselves the tools of Saul's blind rage, for it must have been well known that God intended David to be Saul's successor.

4—7. A confident expectation of deliverance and vow of thanksgiving.

4. *God* is *mine helper*] Taught by his past experience he can say not

The Lord *is* with them that uphold my soul.
5 He shall reward evil unto mine enemies:
Cut them off in thy truth.
6 I will freely sacrifice unto thee:
I will praise thy name, O LORD; for *it is* good.
7 For he hath delivered me out of all trouble:
And mine eye hath seen *his desire* upon mine enemies.

merely that God *will* help him, but that God *is* on his side, so that the issue cannot be doubtful.

the Lord is *with them that uphold my soul*] R.V., **is of them that uphold my soul**: perhaps better, **is the Upholder of my soul**. The expression is an idiomatic one, and "the sense is not that God is the support of the Psalmist among many others, but that He is so in a supreme degree, that He sums up in Himself the qualities of a class, viz. the class of helpers (so cxviii. 7). Comp. Judg. xi. 35, 'Alas, my daughter, thou hast bowed me down, even thou art my greatest troubler.'" (Cheyne). For *uphold* cp. iii. 5 (*sustaineth*); li. 12.

5. **He shall requite the evil unto them that lie in wait for me:**
Destroy thou them in thy truth.

God will cause the evil which they are plotting to recoil upon their own heads: or, according to the *Kethîbh* or written text (*Introd.* p. li), *The evil shall return* &c.: cp. vii. 16. *Enemies* (A.V.) is a peculiar word found only in v. 8; xxvii. 11; lvi. 2; lix. 10, meaning those who lie in wait for him, like fowlers (Jer. v. 26 R.V.), or a leopard for its prey (Hos. xiii. 7). Jerome renders it *insidiatores*.

in thy truth] For Thou canst not be false to Thy promise to deliver me.

6. *I will freely sacrifice unto thee*] Or, **With a free will I will sacrifice unto thee.** So the LXX and Jer. R.V., **with a freewill offering.** But cp. Num xv. 3, "a burnt offering or sacrifice, to accomplish a vow, or of freewill, or in your set feasts."

I will praise thy name, O Lord] R.V., **I will give thanks unto thy name.** Cp. liii. 9. LORD, i.e. Jehovah, appears here, contrary to the general usage of the book. It may have been retained, or restored, in a familiar formula. *For it*, viz. Thy name, *is good*. Cp. liii. 9, and *v.* 1.

7. *for he hath delivered me*] Such a transition from the second person of *v.* 6 to the third person is quite possible: cp. the converse transition in *v.* 5: but the subject of the verb may be 'the Name of Jehovah.' Cp. Lev. xxiv. 11; Is. xxx. 27.

The perfect tense ('hath delivered'...'hath seen') looks back from the hour of thanksgiving upon an answered prayer. Cp. lii. 9, "because thou hast done it."

hath seen his desire] Cp. xxxvii. 34; lii. 6; lix. 10; xcii. 11; cxii. 8; cxviii. 7. Such rejoicing over the fall of enemies is not of the spirit of the Gospel. But the 'salvation' for which the Psalmist prays is a temporal deliverance, which can only be effected at the expense of the implacable enemies who are seeking his life; and it will be a vindication of

God's faithfulness and a proof of His righteous government at which he cannot but rejoice. The defeat of evil and the triumph of good presented themselves to the saints of the O.T. in this concrete form, which sometimes has a ring of personal vindictiveness about it, yet, fairly considered, is in its real motive and character elevated far above a mere thirst for revenge. See *Introd.* pp. lxxxviii ff.

PSALM LV.

Despair, sorrow, indignation, faith, find expression by turns in this pathetic record of persecution embittered by the treachery of an intimate friend, which is a companion to Ps. xli, and should be carefully compared with it. The title ascribes it to David, and its occasion has generally been supposed to be the rebellion of Absalom and the treachery of Ahithophel, whose name the Targum introduces in *v.* 16 (A.V. 15). Much of the Psalm is sufficiently appropriate to David's circumstances to account for its having been regarded as an expression of his feelings at that bitter crisis: but a closer examination makes it difficult, if not impossible, to suppose that it was actually written by him.

There is no hint that the writer is a king whose authority is threatened by a formidable insurrection. Would David have called Ahithophel "a man mine equal", even though the king's confidential adviser was styled his 'friend' (2 Sam. xv. 37; xvi. 17)? The Psalmist appears to be still in the city and unable to escape from it, living in the very midst of his enemies, whose hostility is open and unconcealed: but it was not until after he had fled from the city that David was informed of Ahithophel's treachery (2 Sam. xv. 31); it was at Hebron, not in Jerusalem, that Absalom's conspiracy made head and broke out; David's adherents in Jerusalem were sufficiently strong to prevent any rising until Absalom's arrival, and whatever preparations for rebellion may have been made there were carefully concealed; when David resolved to flee, he had no difficulty in effecting his escape. Moreover although David's administration of justice seems to have been lax or inadequate (2 Sam. xv. 2 ff), it is difficult to believe that Jerusalem can have been such a hotbed of discord and disorder and iniquity as the Psalm describes; and still more difficult to imagine that David should use the language of this Psalm in regard to a state of things for which he was largely responsible.

With this negative conclusion we must remain content. It is impossible to determine with certainty by whom or even at what period the Psalm was written. It has been suggested that Jeremiah was the author, and that the treacherous friend of *v.* 13 was Pashhur, by whom Jeremiah was scourged for predicting the destruction of Jerusalem (Jer. xx). The circumstances which seem to form the historical background of the Psalm resemble those described in the Book of Jeremiah (cp. e.g. Jer. v, vi); similarities of language appear to connect the Psalm with Jeremiah's prophecies (cp. Jer. ix. 2 ff, and references in the notes); Pashhur, as a priest, was Jeremiah's 'equal.' There is however not the

slightest indication in the Book of Jeremiah that Ps. Ahithophel had ever been the prophet's intimate friend, the similarities of thought and language fall far short of proving identity of authorship; and all that can really be said is that the circumstances of the Psalmist receive valuable illustration from the prophecies of Jeremiah. The Psalmist may have been a contemporary of Jeremiah; but he may have lived in the reign of Ahaz or Manasseh, or in some other period when a weak government allowed Jerusalem to become the prey of faction, and in the ambitions of party moral obligations were contemptuously disregarded and old ties of friendship ruthlessly ignored, while the dominant party for the time being heaped insult and injury upon their defeated rivals, and even their lives were not secure. Readers of Thucydides will recall his reflections upon the Corcyraean massacre (*Hist.* iii. 82 ff), and the history of the French Revolution will supply modern illustrations.

In a MS. of Jerome's Latin Version the Psalm bears the title, *Vox Christi adversus magnates Judaeorum et Judam traditorem*, 'The voice of Christ against the chiefs of the Jews and the traitor Judas.' It is not indeed, any more than Ps. xli, a prediction of the treachery of Judas; but every such experience of the faithlessness of trusted friends was a foreshadowing of the experience of the Son of Man. He fathomed the depths of human baseness and cruelty and ingratitude. The experience of the righteous in former generations was 'fulfilled' in His.

The Psalm falls into three nearly equal divisions. In the first of these, despair, in the second, indignation, in the third, trust, is the dominant note. Shorter stanzas of six lines may be traced in the greater part of the Psalm, but either this scheme was not completely carried out, or it has been broken by corruption of the text.

i. The Psalmist begins with an urgent prayer that God will hear him in his distress (1—3 *a*); he describes its nature, and its effect upon him (3 *b*—5); and in language of pathetic beauty, expresses his longing to escape to some quiet refuge (6—8).

ii. Suddenly his tone changes. In vehement indignation he invokes confusion upon the counsels of his enemies, and describes the tyranny of iniquity which is supreme in the city (9—11). What makes their hostility most intolerable is that the leader of the faction was once his intimate friend (12—14). May they meet the fate they deserve (15)!

iii. In a calmer tone he expresses his confidence that God will deliver him (16—18), and judge his arrogant and godless foes (19); and as he mentions them, his mind naturally reverts to the base hypocrisy of the arch-traitor (20, 21). In conclusion he reassures himself by contemplating the contrast between Jehovah's care of the righteous and His judgement of the wicked (22, 23).

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil, *A Psalm* of David.

55 Give ear to my prayer, O God;

1—3 *a*. The Psalmist's passionate appeal to God for a hearing in his distress.

1. *Give ear* &c.] Cp. liv. 2.

And hide not thyself from my supplication.
Attend unto me, and hear me:
I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise;
Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked:
For they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me.
My heart is sore pained within me:
And the terrors of death are fallen upon me.
Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me,
And horror hath overwhelmed me.
And I said, O that I had wings like a dove,
For then would I fly away, and be at rest.

hide not thyself] As the unmerciful man turns away from misfortune and suffering which he does not want to relieve (Deut xxii. 1, 3, 4; Is. lviii. 7); or as though my prayer were the prayer of a hypocrite (Is. i. 15). Cp. x. 1; Lam. iii. 56.

2. *hear me*] Answer me.

I mourn &c.] Render, I am restless in my complaint, and am distracted (R.V. moan). A word used in Gen. xxvii. 40 of a roving life, in Jer. ii. 31 of impatience of restraint (R.V. *break loose*), is here applied to the restlessness of a distracted mind.

3. *the voice of the enemy*] Insulting, calumniating, threatening.

oppression] A peculiar word, found here only, meaning that his enemies hem him in or crush him down. Cp. the cognate verb in Am. ii. 13.

3 *b*—5. He describes the nature of the persecution from which he is suffering, and its effect upon his spirits.

3 *b*. *they cast iniquity upon me*] Not, they charge me with crimes of which I am innocent: but, they hurl or roll mischief down upon me, a metaphor from the practice of rolling stones down upon an enemy. Cp. cxl. 10 (of hot coals), and similar phrases in xxi. 11; 2 Sam. xv. 14.

and in wrath &c.] And in anger are they hostile unto me: (R.V. persecute me).

4. *terrors of death*] Such terrors as the presence of Death, "the king of terrors," inspires.

5. *horror hath overwhelmed me*] The same phrase as in Ezek. vii. 18, "horror shall cover them." The word occurs besides only in Job xxi. 6; Is. xxi. 4.

6—8. He would fain escape to some solitary refuge. Cp. Jer. ix. 2.

6. Weary of his life in the cruel city, he wishes he could be like the dove which he watches winging its flight swiftly to its nest in the clefts of some inaccessible precipice, far from the haunts of men (Cant. ii. 14). The dove may be meant too as an emblem of his own timidity and innocence.

7 Lo, *then* would I wander far off,
And remain in the wilderness. Selah.
8 I would hasten my escape
From the windy storm *and* tempest.
9 Destroy, O Lord, *and* divide their tongues:
For I have seen violence and strife in the city.
10 Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof:
Mischief also and sorrow *are* in the midst of it.
11 Wickedness *is* in the midst thereof:
Deceit and guile depart not from her streets.

7. and *remain* &c.] R.V., I would lodge in the wilderness. *Selah* seems to be misplaced here, and also in *v.* 19.

8. Or as R.V.,

I would haste me to a shelter
From the stormy wind and tempest,

the storms of faction and party spirit raging in the city.

9—15. The plaintive pleading of the opening verses suddenly gives way to a fierce outburst of indignation.

9—11. He prays for the confusion of his enemies' counsels, and describes the miserable condition of the city.

9. *Destroy*] Lit., *swallow up* these malicious plotters, as the earth swallowed up Korah and his crew (Num. xvi. 32). From several passages however it has been inferred that this verb also means *to confound*: and if so, *their tongue* may be the object of both verbs, and there may be a reminiscence of two passages in Genesis:—"The LORD did there *confound* the language of all the earth" (xi. 9): and "In his days was the earth *divided*" (x. 25). May confusion and division such as overtook the builders of Babel overtake them, and break up their confederacy!

10. *they go about it upon the walls thereof*] A metaphor from watchmen going their rounds on the city walls. But who are meant by *they*? Perhaps the party hostile to the Psalmist, who are ever patrolling the city, on the alert for mischief. Cp. Is. xxix. 20. But perhaps rather Violence and Strife personified. These he implies with a bitter irony are the watchmen who are now in charge of order and safety in the city. This explanation agrees well with the following lines:

Iniquity also and Mischief are in the midst of it,
Destruction is in the midst thereof:
Oppression and Deceit depart not from her streets.

11. *Wickedness*] The same word as in lii. 2; *very wickedness* or *destruction*. *deceit*] R.V. **oppression, or, marg., *fraud***.

her streets] Lit., *broad place*: the open space inside the gates, where justice was administered and business transacted. Everywhere throughout the city, in the most public places of concourse, every form of

For *it was* not an enemy *that* reproached me; then I could 12
have borne *it:*
Neither *was it* he that hated me *that* did magnify *himself*
against me; then I would have hid myself from him:
But *it was* thou, a man mine equal, 13
My guide, and mine acquaintance.
We took sweet counsel together, 14
And walked unto the house of God in company.

evil and injustice is rampant, without check or intermission. The whole city lies at their mercy. Cp. the catalogue of vices in x. 7: "His mouth is full of cursing and *deceit* and oppression; under his tongue is *mischief* and *iniquity*."

12—14. Foremost among the Psalmist's enemies is one who had formerly been one of his most intimate and trusted friends. He interrupts the denunciation, which he resumes at *v.* 15, to relate what is the bitterest ingredient in his cup of suffering. The burning indignation of the preceding and following verses gives way for a moment to a pathetic tone of sorrowful reproach. There is no need to suppose, with some critics, that these verses are misplaced, and ought to follow or precede *vv.* 6—8. The sudden transition is most true to nature: *vv.* 9—11 describe the general situation; then for the moment the thought of the personal injury which constitutes its most poignant bitterness eclipses every other thought; and in *v.* 15 indignation against the whole mass of his enemies breaks out again.

12. Render:

For it is not an enemy that reproacheth me, then I could bear it:
Neither is it one that hated me that hath magnified himself
against me, then I would hide myself from him:
But it is thou, a man mine equal,
Mine associate and my familiar friend.

For connects this stanza somewhat loosely with what precedes, giving an additional reason for the prayer of *v.* 9 in the false-hearted treachery of one who is conspicuous among them,—apparently the leader of the faction. If an open and acknowledged enemy had flung scorn at him (xlii. 10; xliv. 16; lvii. 3) in the hour of defeat and humiliation, he could bear it as one of the common ills of life (cp. 2 Sam. xvi. 10 ff): if an old hatred had animated the man who took the lead in procuring his disgrace and degradation, then he might retire into obscurity without repining. But THOU! *Et tu, Brute!* For *magnified himself* cp. xxxv. 26, or xli. 9 (see note).

13. *Mine equal* in rank and position; *my associate* or *companion* (as in Prov. xvi. 28, *chief friends;* Mic. vii. 5, where R.V. marg. *familiar friend* is right); my close acquaintance or familiar friend (xxxi. 11). Cp. Jer. ix. 4 f.

14. **We were wont to take sweet counsel together,**
To walk in the house of God with the throng.

15 Let death seize upon them,
And let them go down quick *into* hell:
For wickedness *is* in their dwellings, *and* among them.
16 *As for* me, I will call upon God;
And the LORD shall save me.
17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud:

Ours was an habitual intimacy of the closest and most sacred kind, in confidential intercourse in private, in companionship in the worship of God in public. *The throng* is the festal procession or assembly of worshippers: the "multitude keeping holyday" of xlii. 4, where however the word for *throng* is different. The P.B.V. *a friend*, follows the LXX ἐν ὁμονοίᾳ, 'in concord,' Vulg. *cum consensu*.

15. The mournful recollections of past friendship so cruelly outraged give way to a fierce invocation of vengeance, and the individual disappears behind the whole body of the Psalmist's enemies. It will be noted that he avoids any personal execration of his old friend.

Let death &c.] The consonants of the written text must be rendered, *Desolations be upon them!* but the word for *desolations* is one which only occurs in the name of a place (*Beth-jeshimoth*) and is not a natural word to apply to persons: and the marginal reading, which the Ancient Versions agree, should certainly be followed in its division of the consonants into two words. Render, Let death come upon them unawares. In this and in the next line Let them go down alive into Sheol, there may be an allusion to the fate of Korah and his company of rebels (Num. xvi. 30, 33). Let them be overtaken in the midst of their villany by a sudden and premature death, which will be a visible judgement on their crimes. Cp. xxxv. 8; and cxxiv. 3; Prov. i. 12. *Quick* in A.V. regularly retains its old meaning *alive*. *Hell* (A.V. *hell*) is not the place of torment, but the abode of the departed, the O.T. equivalent of *Hades*, by which it is rendered in the LXX. See note on vi. 5.

for wickedness &c.] For wickedness (lit. *evils*) is in their dwelling, in the midst of them (lit. *in their inward part*). Evil of every kind finds a home, not only in their dwellings, but in their hearts.

16—23. In this division of the Psalm the storm of indignation dies away, and the Psalmist's trustful confidence revives.

16—18. The Psalmist's assurance that his prayer will be answered.

16. *the LORD*] Here and in *v.* 22 the name JEHOVAH is significant. It is the covenant-God of revelation to Whom he can appeal, and under Whose protection he can rest.

17. *Evening, and morning, and at noon*] *Evening* stands first because the day began at sunset. A reference to stated hours of prayer (cp. Dan. vi. 10; Acts x. 9, 30) is hardly to be found in so natural an expression for "continuing stedfastly in prayer."

will I pray, and cry aloud] R.V., will I complain and moan. Cp. *v.* 2.

And he shall hear my voice.
He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle *that* 18
was against me:
For there were many with me.
God shall hear, and afflict them, 19
Even he that abideth of old. Selah.
Because they have no changes,

and he shall hear] By an idiom which cannot be translated, the Psalmist speaks of this hearing as a present fact. So in *v.* 18 he uses the 'perfect of certainty,' *He hath redeemed*, for the context makes it clear that deliverance has not actually reached him. *In peace* denotes the result: delivered me and placed me in safety.

from the battle that was *against me*] Better, with the Ancient Versions, **that they should not come nigh me.**

for there were many with me] According to this rendering the words may refer to the hosts of angels sent for his succour (2 Kings vi. 16; Ps. xxxiv. 7); but the R.V. is doubtless right in rendering, **for they were many (that strove) with me.**

19. The judgement of his enemies.

God shall hear, and afflict them] Or, *humble them*. This, which is the rendering of the Ancient Versions, is probably right. But it requires a change of the vocalisation. The text as it stands must be rendered with R.V., *and shall hear, and answer them*, meaning apparently, that God will hear their raging and answer them with judgement. But this is an unnatural form of expression. The object to the verbs 'hear' and 'answer' could hardly be other than the Psalmist or his prayer.

even he that abideth of old] Render, **He that sitteth enthroned eternally**, as Judge of the world. (Cp. "Thou most worthy Judge Eternal.") Cp. Deut. xxxiii. 27; Pss. ix. 7, 8; xxix. 10; lxxiv. 12; Hab. i. 12.

Because they have no changes] This is best taken as a relative clause, dependent on the preceding sentence. Render with R.V. (placing a comma only after *of old*),

(The men) who have no changes,
And who fear not God.

'Changes' will mean vicissitudes of fortune. God will humble these men, who, because their prosperity is unbroken, fear Him not. Cp. x. 4–6; lxxiii. 4 ff. The truth is a general one, but the Psalmist is thinking particularly of his own enemies. The P.B.V., *for they will not turn, nor fear God*, takes *changes* in the sense of *change of mind*, repentance, an interpretation adopted by some critics, but not justified by usage. The text is not free from difficulty, but the explanation given above is sufficiently probable to make it unnecessary to assume a further corruption or displacement of the text.

Selah in the middle of a sentence is quite inexplicable, and must be misplaced, as it seems to be in *v.* 7.

Therefore they fear not God.

20 He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him:
He hath broken his covenant.

21 *The words of* his mouth were smoother than butter, but war *was* in his heart:
His words were softer than oil, yet *were* they drawn swords.

22 Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee:

20. 21. Once more the Psalmist reverts to the treachery of his former friend. It is quite natural that he should do so again, abrupt as is the transition from the great mass of his enemies to the one individual who to his mind stands in the forefront of them as the typical traitor. It is unnecessary to transpose these verses to follow vv. 12—14, or to assume that they are a misplaced fragment of another Psalm.

20. *He hath put forth his hands*] The arch-traitor is certainly meant, not (though the Heb. idiom would allow of this explanation) each of the evildoers mentioned in *v.* 19. For the phrase cp. 1 Sam. xxvi. 9, R.V.

against such as be at peace with him] R.V., against such as were at peace with him. Cp. vii. 4; xli. 9 (*familiar friend*, lit. *man of my peace*); Jer. xx. 10; xxxviii. 22. The plural may merely generalise, but seems rather to indicate that the Psalmist is the representative of a party.

he hath broken his covenant] R.V., he hath profaned his covenant: desecrated the sacred obligations of friendship (1 Sam. xviii. 3).

21. The words of *his mouth were smoother than butter*] This rendering, though supported by some of the Ancient Versions and commended by the parallelism (*smoother than butter—softer than oil*), cannot be got out of the text as it stands. This means literally,

Smooth were the buttery words of his mouth.

But an easy emendation gives the sense, *His mouth* [LXX, *face*] *was smoother than butter*. *Smoothness* is the Heb. term for false and hypocritical flattery, as we speak of a 'smooth-faced' or 'smooth-tongued' rogue. Cp. v. 9; xii. 2, 3.

but war was *in his heart*] R.V., but his heart was war.

softer than oil] Cp. "smoother than oil" (Prov. v. 3), of flattering and delusive speeches.

drawn swords] Ready to stab their victim to the heart. Cp. lii. 2, note.

22, 23. Conclusion. The Psalmist's exhortation to himself and everyone in like case, assuring himself and them that God will uphold the righteous and judge the wicked. It has been suggested that in the liturgical use of the Psalm these verses may have been sung by a different voice, as an answer of encouragement to the Psalmist.

22. *Cast thy burden*] The word rendered *burden* is of uncertain meaning. The LXX, from which St Peter borrows (1 Pet. v. 7),

He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.
But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction:
Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days;
But I will trust in thee.

renders *thy care*. But for this explanation there is no philological ground, and the word seems rather to mean *that which he hath given thee*, the burden of care or suffering which He hath laid upon thee to bear. *He shall sustain thee*, not necessarily removing the burden, but giving strength to bear it, upholding thee lest thou shouldest fall under its weight. Cp. xxii. 8, xxxvii. 5, and notes.

The later Greek Versions and Jerome presume a reading which differs very slightly so far as the appearance of the consonants is concerned: *Cast* [*thy burden*, or, *thy cause*] *upon Jehovah, who loveth thee*. The form of the sentence would then resemble xxii. 8. But the reading is scarcely probable.

He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved] We must either understand *moved* of final and fatal disaster, or else render, *He will not suffer the righteous to be moved for ever*: though they may be in distress for awhile, there will be an end to their suffering. For the phrase cp. x. 6; xiii. 4; xxx. 6.

23. *shalt bring them down*] Namely, the foes, who are still in the Psalmist's mind: their end is the pit of the grave: a premature death awaits bloodthirsty and deceitful men, whom God abhors (v. 6). Cp. xxxvii. 35 f; cix. 8, and many passages which speak of the penal death of the wicked.

But I &c.] But as for me, I will trust in thee. The same God who destroys the wicked is the object of the Psalmist's trust: and in truth the extermination of the wicked is but the converse of the reward and exaltation of the righteous: the one is the necessary preliminary to the other: and the earth, be it remembered, is the stage upon which the Psalmist expects to see the *dénouement* of the drama of life, the vindication of God's moral government of the world. See *Introd.* p. xci ff.

PSALM LVI.

Trust in God in the presence of danger is the keynote of this and the following Psalm, which are intimately connected together. The danger is imminent; fear is inevitable; but faith is victorious over fear. The spirit of the Psalm is concentrated in the twice-repeated refrain (*vv.* 3, 4; 10, 11).

This Psalm and Ps. xxxiv are connected by their titles with the same period in David's life. His first visit to Gath (1 Sam. xxi. 10 ff), when he went there as a solitary fugitive, must be the occasion referred to. Finding that his life was no longer safe in Judah, he resorted to the desperate expedient of taking refuge with the enemies of his country, hoping no doubt that the Philistines would not recognise in him the stripling who slew their champion. But their suspicions were aroused:

David, in fear for his life, feigned madness, so that he might be supposed to be harmless. It is not expressly stated in 1 Samuel that the Philistines forcibly detained him, but the words "feigned himself mad *in their hands*," together with the mention of his *escape* in ch. xxii. 1, seem to imply that he was practically a prisoner.

The obscure words of the title set to Yonath elem rechōkim, are paraphrased in the LXX, "For the people removed far from the sanctuary"; and in the Targum, "Concerning the congregation of Israel, which is compared to a silent dove at the time when they were far from their cities, and turned again and praised the Lord of the World." These interpretations are interesting as shewing that the Psalm was at an early date regarded as a *national* Psalm, and placed in the mouth of the suffering people. Hence the Psalmist has been regarded by some critics as "the mouthpiece of oppressed and suffering Israel." But it is a mistake to say that this is "the oldest interpretation of the Psalm." For the title, whether it rests upon an authentic tradition or is only the conjecture of the editor of this book, proves that at a still earlier time the Psalm was regarded as the expression of *personal* experience. And this is the natural account of its origin; its use as the prayer of the nation in exile was a secondary application of it. While it is impossible to affirm with certainty that it was really composed by David in Gath, it breathes the spirit of trust in God in the face of danger by which David was animated, and may be taken as an illustration of his feelings in that hour of his extremity.

The Psalm consists of two stanzas, each ending with a refrain, vv. 1—4, 5—11; and a concluding thanksgiving vv. 12, 13. In each of the principal stanzas prayers for help against enemies whose hostility is described are combined with the strongest expressions of trust in God.

In the title, For the chief Musician: set to Yonath elem rechōkim. (A Psalm) of David; Michtam: when the Philistines took him in Gath: the words *Yonath elem rechōkim* mean *The silent dove of them that are afar off*, or if *ēlēm* be read for *ēlem* (a change of vowel-points only), *The dove of the distant terebinths*. These words, like 'The hind of the morning' in the title of Ps. xxii, are doubtless the title of some song to the melody of which the Psalm was to be sung, so called either from its opening words or from its subject. The explanation which regards these words as a figurative description of the subject of the Psalm (*concerning the silent dove* &c.), the innocent sufferer David patiently enduring persecution in a foreign land, is now generally abandoned.

To the chief Musician upon Jonath-elem-rechokim, Michtam of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath.

56 Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up;

On *Michtam*, which appears in the titles of the four following Psalms also, and of Ps. xvi, see *Introd.* p. xx.

1—4. However fiercely his enemies may assault him, he will trust in God, Who will surely be true to His promise.

1. *Be merciful*] Be gracious: see note on li. 1, and cp. lvii. 1.

He fighting daily oppresseth me.
Mine enemies would daily swallow *me* up:
For *they be* many that fight against me, O thou *most* High
What time I am afraid,
I will trust in thee.
In God I will praise his word,
In God I have put my trust; I will not fear
What flesh can do unto me.

for man would swallow me up] Like a wild beast rushing upon its prey. But all the Ancient Versions render *trample upon* or *crush*, which may be right. Cp. lvii. 3. The word for *man* denotes *mortal man* as contrasted with God. Cp. ix. 19; x. 18. Will the Almighty allow weak men to triumph against His Will?

he fighting daily &c.] R.V., **all the day long he fighting oppresseth** me. See note on xlii. 9. 'All the day long' is a phrase characteristic of this Psalm, *vv.* 2, 5.

2. **They that lie in wait for me would swallow me up** [or, **crush me**] **all the day long:**
For many are they that fight against me haughtily.

For *they that lie in wait for me* see note on liv. 5. The word rendered *O thou most High* in A.V. is not *Elyōn*, the word usually so rendered (e.g. lvii. 2), but *mārōm*. This word is applied to God, as in Mic. vi. 6, "the high God," Ps. xcii. 8, "Thou, O LORD, art on high for evermore:" but it can hardly stand by itself as a vocative, and probably means 'with a high hand,' 'haughtily.' Cp. lxxiii. 8. 'Be thou exalted' in lvii. 5, 11 is derived from the same root. The Psalmist prays that God will prove His own supreme exaltation against these self-exalted braggarts. P.B.V. *are in hand* = are busying themselves.

3. What *time* &c.] Lit., *In the day that I am afraid*. David's sojourn in Gath is the only occasion on which he is recorded to have been afraid of man (1 Sam. xxi. 12; but cp. Ps. xviii. 4).

I will trust in thee] R.V., **I will put my trust in thee**, as in A.V. *v.* 4. *I* is emphatic; *they* trust in their own might, but *I* will trust in Thee. The preposition, which is different from that in *v.* 4, gives a delicate shade of meaning, 'I will trustfully betake myself to Thee.' "Each day of peril should be to him a discipline of faith." *Kay*.

4. *In God I will praise his word*] In God's strength, by the help of His grace, I shall be enabled to praise His words of promise (cxxx. 5). Cp. xliv. 8. This rendering is preferable to the possible alternative, *In God do I make my boast, even in his word*.

in God &c.] R.V., **In God have I put my trust. I will not be afraid; what can flesh do unto me?** *Flesh*, synonymous with *man* in *v.* 11, denotes man on the material side of his nature, as a frail and perishable being, contrasted with God the Eternal and Almighty. Cp. lxxviii. 39; Gen. vi. 3; Job x. 4; Is. xl. 5, 6; Jer. xvii. 5.

5 Every day they wrest my words:
All their thoughts *are* against me for evil.
6 They gather themselves together, they hide themselves,
They mark my steps,
When they wait for my soul.
7 *Shall* they escape by iniquity?
In *thine* anger cast down the people, O God.
8 Thou tellest my wanderings:
Put thou my tears into thy bottle:

5—11. The second division of the Psalm is similar to the first: a description of present distress, and prayer for help, followed by an expression of perfect confidence in God's protection.

5. From the heights of faith he returns to the urgent reality of present distress. Cp. xlii. 6.

Every day] R.V., **all the day long.**

they wrest my words] Distorting and perverting them. Calumniators endeavoured to poison Saul's mind against David, 1 Sam. xxiv. 9, cp. Ps. vii. 3 ff. But the meaning is somewhat doubtful. It may be, *they pervert my affairs*, i.e. injure my interests.

all their thoughts &c.] Cp. xli. 7.

6. *they hide themselves*] I.e., lie in wait for me; or according to the Kthībh, *set an ambush*. Cp. lix. 3; x. 8, 9.

they mark my steps] Like hunters tracking their game. "Go, I pray you," said Saul to the men of Keilah, "and know and see his place where his haunt (lit. *foot*) is" (1 Sam. xxiii. 22, 23).

when they wait &c.] R.V., even as marg. *inasmuch as*) **they have waited for my soul**; have been watching their opportunity to take my life. Cp. cxix. 95.

7. Shall *they escape by iniquity?*] Or, *In spite of iniquity shall they escape?* When their conduct is so inhuman, shall they escape the judgement? Less probable is the rendering of R.V. marg. (for the thought of which cp. Is. xxviii. 15), *They think to escape by iniquity*. But the phrase is obscure, and the emendation PALLĒS for PALLET adopted by many critics deserves consideration: *Weigh unto them* (i.e. pay them, cp. lviii. 2) *according to their iniquity*.

in thine *anger* &c.] **In anger bring down peoples, O God**: humble them by judgement. Cp. lv. 23; Is. lxiii. 6. This prayer, it is said, is unsuitable for an individual: it must be the voice of the congregation demanding the humiliation of its proud oppressors. But here, as in vii. 6 ff., the appeal for a particular judgement is absorbed in the desire for a general judgement of the world.

8. *Thou tellest my wanderings*] Thou countest the days and adventures of my fugitive life, while I am driven from my home as a wanderer and vagabond (xxxvi. 11, note); not one of them escapes Thy notice (Job xxxi. 4; Matt. x. 30). *Tell*, as in xxii. 17, xlviii. 12, means *count*.

put thou my tears] Or, *my tears are put*.

into thy bottle] By a bold figure God is said to collect and treasure

Are they not in thy book?
When I cry *unto thee*, then shall mine enemies turn back: 9
This I know; for God *is* for me.
In God will I praise *his* word: 10
In the LORD will I praise *his* word.
In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid 11
What man can do unto me.

Thy vows *are* upon me, O God: 12
I will render praises unto thee.
For thou hast delivered my soul from death: *wilt* not *thou* 13
deliver my feet from falling,

his tears, as though they were precious wine. Kay quotes St. Bernard's saying, "Lacrimae poenitentium vinum angelorum." The 'bottle' is the skin bottle of Oriental countries, holding a considerable quantity (Josh. ix. 4, 13; 1 Sam. xvi. 20; Ps. cxix. 83). There is no reference to the use of so-called 'lachrymatories.'

are they *not in thy book?*] Or, *record*. For God's 'book of remembrance' see Mal. iii. 16. Cp. Ex. xxxii. 32; Ps. lxix. 28; cxxxix. 16. The abrupt question is characteristic of this Psalm. Cp. *vv.* 4, 13.

9. Then shall mine enemies turn back in the day when I call: This I know, that [or, for] God is on my side.

For the emphatic *then* cp. ii. 5. The certainty that God is on his side is the ground of his assurance that his enemies will be put to flight. Cp. **ix. 3; cxviii. 6.**

10. his *word*] The omission of the pronoun, which is found in *v.* 4, is difficult. If the text is sound, *word* must be used absolutely for the divine word of promise. **Cp. Prov. xiii. 13; xvi. 20.**

In the LORD *will I praise* his *word*] The line is repeated for emphasis with the substitution of the covenant name *Jehovah* for *God*. The two names sometimes occur together in the Elohistic Psalms (e.g. lv. 16; lviii. 6); and a refrain is not always repeated in precisely the same form. But the repetition may simply be a 'conflate reading,' the second line being either the survival or the restoration of the original text, while the first line is due to the 'Elohistic' editor.

11. In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid; What can man do unto me? (R.V.).

'Man' = 'flesh' of *v.* 4. Cp. cxviii. 6, borrowed from this passage.

12, 13. Concluding vows of thanksgiving.

12. *Thy vows* &c.] Vows made to Thee. The Psalmist acknowledges his obligations. **Cp. lxvi. 13; Acts xxi. 23.**

praises] R.V., **thank offerings**, in addition to the votive offerings.

13. Borrowed with slight variations in cxvi. 8.

For thou hast delivered &c.] He takes his stand in the future and looks back upon deliverance granted. **Cp. liv. 7.**

wilt *not* thou deliver *my feet from falling*] **Yea, my feet from**

That I may walk before God in the light of the living?

stumbling: lit., 'hast thou *not* delivered *my feet from thrusting*?' i.e. not only saved me from death, but upheld me when the foe "thrust sore at me that I might fall" (cxviii. 13; cp. xxxvi. 12).

that I may walk before God] Not simply live in His presence and under His protection, but serve Him acceptably. So the LXX, τοῦ εὐαρεστῆσαι ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ; cp. Heb. xi. 5, 6. Cp. Gen. xvii. 1; xxiv. 40; Ps. lxi. 7: and Gen. v. 22, 24; vi. 9.

in the light of the living] Or, of life. "The land of the living" (xxvii. 13; cxvi. 9) is the land of light contrasted with the darkness of the grave (Job xxxiii. 28, 30); it is illuminated by the Presence of God (xxxvi. 9), from Whom comes all that is worthy to be called happiness. What to the Psalmist was a present and temporal truth, receives for the Christian a spiritual and eternal meaning. Cp. John viii. 12, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."

PSALM LVII.

This Psalm resembles the preceding Psalm in thought, language, and structure. It breathes the same lofty spirit of confidence in the presence of danger; it begins with the same cry, 'be gracious unto me,' and uses the same word (*v.* 3) to express the enemy's ferocity; it has two principal divisions, each closed with a refrain (*vv.* 5, 11). But it has also marked characteristics of its own in thought, language, and rhythm. Its tone is more triumphant; and it is distinguished by the use of the figure, common in lyrical poetry, of 'epizeuxis,' or emphatic repetition of words (*vv.* 1, 3, 7, 8).

The title attributes the Psalm to David when he was "in the cave" during his flight from Saul. It is doubtful whether the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. xxii), or the cave in the wilderness of En-gedi, on the western shore of the Dead Sea (1 Sam. xxiv), is meant. The reference to enemies caught in their own trap (*v.* 6) may perhaps point to the latter occasion. There is nothing in the Psalm (not even *v.* 9, see note), inconsistent with its Davidic authorship, but on the other hand nothing decisively in favour of it. It may have been written to illustrate this episode in David's fugitive life. This Psalm, like the preceding one, has been explained as a prayer of the suffering nation: but its language is certainly more appropriate to an individual than to the nation.

The Psalm consists of two divisions, each ending with the same refrain, an appeal to God to manifest His supreme and universal sovereignty.

i. Prayer for protection and confident anticipation of help in the midst of imminent danger (1—5).

ii. Resolution to give thanks to God for His goodness in the certain prospect that the malice of enemies will recoil upon themselves (6—11).

The Psalm is appointed as a Proper Psalm for Easter Day, partly as an appropriate thanksgiving for Christ's triumph over the powers of Death and Hell; partly because the refrain is the expression of the Messianic hope which finds its guarantee in the triumph of the Resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 24—28).

Vv. 7—11 form the first part of the composite Ps. cviii: and *v.* 10 is found again almost verbatim in xxxvi. 5. Cp. also *v.* 1 with xxxvi. 7.

The melody to which this Psalm, as well as the two following Psalms and also Ps. lxxv, was to be sung is described as *Al-tashchēth*, i.e. 'Destroy not.' Of the song which gave this title it is possible that "a trace is still preserved in Is. lxv. 8. 'When the new wine is found in the cluster,' says the prophet, 'men say, 'Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it.' These words in the Hebrew have a distinct lyric rhythm. They are the first line of one of the vintage songs so often alluded to in Scripture. And so we learn that the early religious melody of Israel had a popular origin, and was closely connected with the old joyous life of the nation." Robertson Smith, *Old Test. in the Jewish Church*, p. 209.

To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.

Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: 57
For my soul trusteth in thee:
Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge,
Until *these* calamities be overpast.
I will cry unto God most High;
Unto God that performeth *all things* for me.

1—5. Beset by fierce and cruel enemies, the Psalmist throws himself upon God's protection, with the confident assurance of speedy help.

1. *Be merciful unto me*] **Be gracious unto me**, as in lvi. 1.
for my soul &c.] Render:

For in thee hath my soul taken refuge,
And in the shadow of thy wings will I take refuge,
Until destruction's storm be overpast.

The distinction of tenses is significant. He has placed himself under Jehovah's protection, and in his present distress claims his rights as Jehovah's client. *The shadow of thy wings* is a beautiful metaphor from the care of the mother-bird for her young. When danger threatens, they run to her for shelter. Cp. xvii. 8; xxxvi. 7; lxi. 4; lxiii. 7; xci. 4; Ruth ii. 12; Matt. xxiii. 37.

Calamities is the same word as that rendered *mischiefs* in lii. 2, *wickedness* in lv. 11 (see notes), and the verb suggests the metaphor of a storm. Cp. Is. xxvi. 20.

2. *I will cry* &c.] **I will call unto God Most High.** Cp. lv. 16; lvi. 9. The combination *Elōhīm Elyon* occurs only here and in lxxviii. 56; it is the Elohistic equivalent of *Jehovah Elyon* (vii. 17; cp.

3 He shall send from heaven, and save me
From the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah.
God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.
4 My soul *is* among lions:
And I lie *even among* them that are set on fire, *even* the sons of men,

xlvii. 2; lxxxiii. 18; xcvii. 9). *El Elyon* occurs in lxxviii. 35 (cp. lxxiii. 11); Gen. xiv. 18 ff. The Psalmist appeals to God first as the 'Most High' (see Appendix, Note ii), a name which implies God's power to help him, as the supreme Ruler of the world; and then as *God* (El) *that performeth* all things *for me*, a title which implies His willingness to help His servant now as heretofore. Here as in cxxxviii. 8, the object of the verb is left to be supplied (cp. lii. 9). He will perform all that needs to be performed. Cp. Phil. iv. 19.

3. *He shall send from heaven*] There is no need to supply an object to the verb here. The object is introduced when the verb is repeated according to the characteristic peculiarity of this Psalm. For the meaning cp. xx. 2, and perhaps xviii. 16, though see note there.

from *the reproach* &c.] Better, **(For) he that would swallow me up** (or, *crush me*, lvi. 1, note) **hath reproached**. The object of the verb may be God, Whom the enemy blasphemes in denying His willingness to help His servant (Is. xxxvii. 23, 24); or the Psalmist, whom he taunts with being deserted by his God (xlii. 10; lv. 12). The rendering of A.V. marg., *he reproacheth him that would swallow me up*, is contrary to usage, for the word is never used of God rebuking men.

Selah here is probably misplaced, cp. lv. 19. In the LXX it follows *v.* 2.

God shall send forth &c.] God's *lovingkindness and truth* (cp. xlii. 8, xliii. 3) are almost personified as "ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation." It is in virtue of the lovingkindness which is the foundation of His covenant, and of the faithfulness which is an inalienable attribute of His nature, that God will send help to His servant.

4. A difficult verse, the text of which is perhaps corrupt. Adhering to the punctuation (in the modern sense) of the Massoretic accents, we may render with R.V.,

My soul is among lions;
I lie among them that are set on fire,
Even the sons of men, &c.

i.e. virtually, as the marg., *I must lie*, an expression of despondent resignation. But the note of despair is out of harmony with the generally courageous and confident tone of the Psalm; and it is more in accordance with the usual force of the Heb. tense (the 'cohortative' or 'voluntative') to take *I will lie down* as expressive of strong resolution:

My soul is among lions;
I will lie down to rest among fiery foes,
Even the sons of men, &c.

Whose teeth *are* spears and arrows,
And their tongue a sharp sword.
Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; 5
Let thy glory *be* above all the earth.

They have prepared a net for my steps; 6
My soul is bowed down:

Though my life is in momentary danger from savage enemies, I will lie down to rest (cp. iv. 8) among these fiery foes, secure under God's protection. The Psalm is an evening hymn, for the Psalmist contemplates 'waking the dawn' with his praises (*v.* 8). He lies down in danger, he awakes in safety: the night of trouble ends in the dawn of deliverance.

Delitzsch. rightly understanding the words as an expression of confidence, thinks that actual wild beasts are meant, among which he feels more secure than among his deadly foes; but this is scarcely probable.

Neglecting the accents we may render somewhat differently, **With my life in my hands** (so the idiomatic apposition '*my soul, I*' may be paraphrased) **I must lie down** (or, **I will lie down**) **among lions: fiery are the sons of men** &c.; but the sense will be substantially the same. For *lions* as a metaphor for fierce and dangerous enemies cp. vii. 2: x. 9; xvii. 12.

whose teeth] The language is suggested by the comparison of his enemies to lions.

their tongue &c.] The reference may be not so much to slander, as to the blasphemy of which he speaks in *v.* 3, which pierces him to the heart. Cp. xlii. 10. See also lii. 2 note; lviii. 6; lxiv. 3; Prov. xxx. 14.

5. The thought of man's murderous hostility naturally leads up to the prayer that God will manifest Himself in majesty. From the confusions of earth the Psalmist looks up to God. Cp. xi. 4 ff.; xxxvi. 5 ff.

Be thou exalted] Or, **Exalt thyself.** Cp. xxi. 13; xlvi. 10. God *is* exalted in majesty (Is. vi. 1): what is needed is that He should *manifest* His supreme authority (Is. ii. 11 ff.) over these insolent rebels.

Though rhythmically divided, the two clauses are logically one: 'exalt Thyself in Thy glory above heaven and earth.'

6—11. Convinced that God will manifest His authority, the Psalmist sees the machinations of his enemies turning to their own defeat, and utters resolutions of joyous thanksgiving.

6. The transposition of *vv.* 5 and 6, proposed by Cheyne and others, simply ruins the sense. *v.* 6 is the fitting sequel of *v.* 5. Just as in lvi. 5 ff, he returns after the refrain to contemplate his present situation. But now Faith sees the prayer of *v.* 5 answered, and with the manifestation of God's supreme authority all opposition is subdued, nay, his foes' own schemes prove their ruin.

my soul is bowed down] Perhaps we should read with the LXX, they

They have digged a pit before me,
Into the midst whereof they are fallen *themselves*. Selah.
7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed:
I will sing and give praise.
8 Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp:
I *myself* will awake early.
9 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people:
I will sing unto thee among the nations.

have bowed down my soul; i.e. (the perf. as in lvi. 1) they have made sure of capturing me. But it is tempting to go further and read (with Ewald), *their soul is bowed down*, thereby securing a double parallelism in the verse. Lines 1 and 3 then describe their plots: lines 2 and 4 describe how they are caught in their own trap. The metaphors are taken from the nets and pitfalls used by hunters. Cp. vii. 15; ix. 15 f.; xxxv. 7; Ezek. xix. 4; Eccl. x. 8.

into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves] Better, **they are fallen into the midst of it**.

7. *My heart is fixed*] Stedfastly resolved. Cp. li. 10; cxii. 7; Col. i. 23 (ἑδραῖος is the word used by Symmachus here). The P.B.V. has changed Coverdale's *ready* into *fixed* here, but retained it in cviii. 1, probably owing to the influence of the familiar Latin title, *Paratum cor meum*, at the beginning of that Psalm.

I will sing and give praise] **I will sing and make melody**. The latter is the verb from which *mizmōr*, 'psalm,' is derived. See *Introd.* p. xvii.

8. *Awake up*] A common summons to action. Cp. Judg. v. 12; Is. li. 9, 17; lii. 1.

my glory] So the soul is designated, either as the noblest part of man, or as the image of the divine glory. Cp. vii. 5; xvi. 9; xxx. 12.

psaltery and harp] Stringed instruments, often coupled together (xxxiii. 2; 1 Sam. x. 5; 2 Sam. vi. 5; 1 Kings x. 12; Is. v. 12).

I myself *will awake early*] Better, as R.V. marg., **I will awake the dawn**. A bold and beautiful poetical figure. The dawn is often personified (Job xli 18; Ps. cxxxix. 9). Usually it is the dawn that awakes men: he will awake the dawn by his praises before daylight. Cp. Milton, *L'Allegro*, l. 53,

> "Oft listening how the hounds and horn
> Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn."

and Ovid, *Metam.* xi. 597,

> "Non vigil ales ibi cristati cantibus oris
> Evocat auroram."

9. **I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the peoples: I will make melody unto thee among the nations.**

This verse at any rate, it is said, could never have been written by David, and is only really intelligible, if the Psalmist speaks in the name of the nation. But the words are not unsuitable for one who was

For thy mercy *is* great unto the heavens, 10
And thy truth unto the clouds.
Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: 11
Let thy glory *be* above all the earth.

chosen to be king over a nation which had a special calling in relation to the nations of the world. If the nations were to be brought under the sway of Israel that they might be taught to know Jehovah, it was fitting that they should hear of Jehovah's faithfulness exhibited in the deliverance of His servant. Cp. xviii. 49 (with the context); ix. 11.

10. **For thy lovingkindness is great unto the heavens,**
And thy truth unto the skies.

For gives the reason for *v.* 9. Mercy and truth which reach from earth to heaven demand world-wide praise. Note that it is the attributes which minister to the deliverance of God's servant (*v.* 3) which are expressly named. Sent forth for his help they have proved victorious. Almost the same words are found in xxxvi. 5. Cp. Eph. iii. 18.

11. How can the Psalmist conclude more fitly than with a repetition of this prayer, which now looks beyond his own immediate needs to that perfect and universal sovereignty of God, which is the final goal of hope (1 Cor. xv. 28; Rev. xix. 6)?

PSALM LVIII.

This Psalm begins with an indignant remonstrance with those in authority, who not only fail to administer justice equitably, but are themselves among the worst of offenders (1, 2). A description of the incurably wicked, among whom, it is implied, such men must be classed, follows (3—5), and leads up to a prayer (or perhaps an expression of confident assurance) that God will render them powerless to hurt, or utterly destroy them (6—9). The Psalm concludes with a description of the double result of the judgement: the righteous who are freed from their oppressors rejoice; and men in general acknowledge God's moral government of the world (10, 11).

The Psalm is remarkable for the vigour of its language and the boldness of its figures. It has a ring of prophetic authority, in its denunciation of wicked men in high place, and its prediction of the certainty of their downfall.

Adhering to the title, which assigns it to David, Delitzsch supposes that it refers to Absalom's rebellion. In *vv.* 1, 2 we might find an allusion to Absalom's pretended zeal for justice (2 Sam. xv. 2 ff.), while in reality he was meditating the most monstrous crimes: the language of *vv.* 3 ff. is not too severe for the graceless treachery of the son who shrank from no extremes, and coldly contemplated parricide (2 Sam. xvi, xvii. 1—4): *vv.* 6—9 might well refer to the sudden and complete collapse of the rebellion, and *vv.* 10, 11 to the rejoicing of David's sympathisers at the victory (2 Sam. xviii. 19 ff.; note the phrase, "the

LORD hath *judged* and delivered him out of the hand of his enemies"; xix. 2).

But it is inconceivable that at any point of time, before or after the outbreak of the insurrection, David could have used the language of the Psalm with reference to Absalom. Beforehand indeed (though we may draw a wrong inference from the brevity of the narrative in 2 Sam.) he seems to have been blind to what was going on: and when he knew the worst, his feelings of anxiety for the personal safety of Absalom and finally of grief at his death (2 Sam. xviii. 5, 33; xix. 4), are as unlike the severe indignation of this Psalm as anything could well be. If it refers to Absalom's rebellion, it can never have been written by David.

More probably however it belongs to some later period in the history of Israel. There is no sufficient ground for supposing that the unjust judges are foreigners, whether Babylonians, Persians, or Syrians, and that the Psalm is post-exilic. The evils complained of are precisely those against which the prophets of the regal period are constantly inveighing.

Compare generally Pss. xii, xiv, and especially lxxxii; and with the concluding verses cp. the conclusions of lxiv and cxl.

To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David.

58 Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation?
Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?

For the title see Ps. lvii.

1, 2. An indignant remonstrance with those in authority, who, instead of condemning crime, are themselves the most guilty criminals.

1. *O congregation*] This rendering of the obscure word *ēlēm*, adopted by the scholars of the early part of the 16th century from the learned Rabbi David Kimchi (c. 1160—1235), cannot be defended, and does not suit the context. The word *ēlēm* occurs elsewhere only in the title of Ps. lvi, and from its derivation appears to mean *silence*.

i. Taking this meaning, we may render,

(1) as R.V., **Do ye indeed in silence speak righteousness?** The Psalmist expostulates with the judges who neglect their office. "They are *dumb* when they ought to speak, as afterwards they are said to be deaf when they ought to *hear*." (Bp Perowne). 'To speak righteousness' means 'to pronounce just sentences.' Justice and uprightness are characteristics of God's judgement (ix. 8), which ought to be reflected by all earthly judges.

(2) as R.V. marg. with substantially the same sense: **Is the righteousness ye should speak dumb?**

(3) as Kay: **Will ye indeed utter long-silent justice?** a reference, he supposes, to Absalom's profession of a desire to remedy the want of proper provision for the administration of justice, while he was himself

Yea, in heart you work wickedness;
You weigh the violence of your hands in the earth. 2

plotting the unnatural crime of rebellion against his father. See 2 Sam. xv. 2—6.

With this reading it is best to retain the rendering, *O ye sons of men*, in the next line, though it is also possible to render, *Do ye judge uprightly the sons of men?* The judges are addressed as *sons of men* to remind them that they are but human, and themselves subject to a higher tribunal.

ii. Most critics, however, think that here (as perhaps in the title of Ps. lvi also) the word *ēlĕm* should be read with different vowels, *ēlīm*, 'gods,' or, 'mighty ones.' We must then render,

Do ye indeed, O ye gods, speak righteousness?
Do ye judge uprightly the sons of men?

The judges are addressed as *ēlīm*, 'gods,' as in Ps. lxxxii. 1, 6 they are called *elōhīm*, 'gods,' because in their judicial capacity they acted as the representatives of God, the supreme Judge. They are thus addressed here, half-sarcastically and half-reproachfully, in contrast to the 'sons of men,' over whom they exercise jurisdiction; as well as to emphasise the comparison between their failure to administer justice, and the righteous judgement of God (*v.* 11).

Ēlim however is not so used elsewhere, and may simply mean 'mighty ones.' Cp. Ex. xv. 15; 2 Kings xxiv. 15; Job xli. 25 (Heb. 17); Ezek. xvii. 13; xxxii. 21.

Cheyne and some other commentators find here a reference to the angels, "to whom the actual administration of the world's government has been entrusted." But there is nothing in the context to justify the importation of an idea which belongs to the later development of Jewish theology. It is true that it is found in the LXX of Deut. xxxii. 8, "He set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God"; but this paraphrase has no claim to be regarded as representing the original text.

iii. None of the Ancient Versions however give any support to this emendation. The LXX and Jerome render *ēlĕm* as an adverb ('then' or 'certainly'); the Syr. omits it; Aquila and the Targ. attest the reading of the text. Plausible as the emendation is, it must not be made a basis of argument, and the obscurity of the passage must be admitted.

2. *Yea*] Or, Nay, for the particle implies a negative answer, and an additional accusation. Far from judging equitably, you are yourselves the greatest offenders.

in heart] Inwardly they are ever contriving some scheme of injustice, like the nobles against whom Micah inveighs (ii. 1), as "working evil upon their beds."

ye weigh] R.V., ye weigh out. There is a bitter irony in the use of a word strictly applicable to justice only. For the metaphor of the 'scales of justice' cp. Job xxxi. 6.

in the earth] Or, *in the land;* publicly and openly, carrying into execution the schemes they contrive in their hearts. Cp. Mic. ii. 1.

3 The wicked are estranged from the womb:
They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.
4 Their poison *is* like the poison of a serpent:
They are like the deaf adder *that* stoppeth her ear;
5 Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers,
Charming *never so* wisely.
6 Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth:
Break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD.

3—5. A description of the class to which these wicked judges belong; the deliberately wicked, who are deaf to remonstrance and incapable of reformation.

3. *are estranged*] From God and His laws. Cp. Eph. iv. 18, "alienated from the life of God": Col. i. 21, "alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works," where St Paul uses the word (ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι) employed by the LXX here.

"The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. viii. 21); but these men have shewn a more than ordinary aptitude for wickedness. It has become to them a second nature.

4, 5. They are not only insidious and venomous as serpents, but obstinately oppose all attempts to control them; like the deaf adder or asp, most venomous of all serpents, which resists all the arts of the charmer. The Arabs distinguish the 'deaf' serpent from that which answers the call of the charmer by hissing. Snake charming is alluded to in Eccl. x. 11; Jer. viii. 17; Ecclus. xii. 13, and is still practised in Africa and the East. As the asp is deaf to the voice of the enchanter, so these men shut their ears to the warnings and exhortations of the prophets.

Experience confirms the teaching of the Psalmist that among the endless varieties of human character, there are some which exhibit a diabolical aptitude for evil and opposition to good. In the light of God's infinite love, none are outside the pale of His mercy; yet it lies in the power of man to defeat the operations of His grace (Matt. xii. 31).

6—9. Since they are thus obstinately and incurably evil, nothing remains but that they should be deprived of their power to hurt or altogether destroyed.

6. The figure of the serpent, typical of insidious deadliness, is changed to that of the lion, typical of open ferocity.

Break...break out] Render them powerless for harm. Two strong words, properly used of breaking down and overthrowing walls. Cp. iii. 7; Job iv. 10: Prov. xxx. 14.

The LXX rendering of these verbs as perfects of certainty deserves consideration. It only requires a different vocalisation of the consonants, and gives an excellent sense: *God shall surely break* &c. The tenses in *vv.* 7, 8 must then be rendered as futures: *They shall melt away* &c. Such an authoritative declaration of the punishment in store for the wicked seems more in keeping with the prophetic tone of the Psalm than the prayer for their destruction.

Let them melt away as waters *which* run continually: 7
When he bendeth *his bow to shoot* his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces.
As a snail *which* melteth, let *every one of them* pass away: 8
Like the untimely birth of a woman, *that* they may not see the sun.
Before your pots can feel the thorns, 9
He shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in *his* wrath.

7. *as waters* which *run continually*] R.V., restoring P.B.V., **as water that runneth apace**: like some torrent that rages wildly for a while when swollen by a sudden storm, and then vanishes entirely (Job vi. 15 ff.).

when *he bendeth* his bow to shoot *his arrows*] A cumbrous rendering of a peculiar phrase, the verb strictly applicable to the bow being used of the arrows (cp. lxiv. 3). Better as R.V., **when he aimeth his arrows**. But who is the subject? (1) It may be the wicked man, (as in lxiv. 3); **When he aimeth his arrows, let them be as though they were cut off** (R.V.), their points broken, and their power to hurt destroyed. (2) It may be God (as in vii. 12 f.); **when He aimeth His arrows, let them** (the wicked) **be as it were mowed down**. Cp. xc. 6. Neither alternative is free from serious difficulties, but the first seems preferable.

8. **Let them be like a snail which melts away and is gone:**
Like the untimely births of women, that have not seen the sun.

Two more figures for the destruction of the wicked:—let them melt away; nay, vanish as though they had never existed.

The word *shablūl* puzzled the ancient translators. The LXX render it 'wax' (doubtless to suit the verb 'melt'), Jerome 'worm'; but later Hebrew attests the meaning *snail*. But what is the point of comparison? Is it that the snail seems to melt away as it goes along, leaving a slimy track behind it, or perhaps was popularly supposed to do so? or is it not rather an allusion to the way in which snails dry up and perish in drought? There are to be found in all parts of Palestine "myriads of snail shells in fissures, still adhering by the calcareous exudation round their orifice to the surface of the rock, but the animal of which is utterly shrivelled and wasted—'melted away,' according to the expression of the Psalmist." Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 296.

For the second figure cp. Job iii. 16; Eccl. vi. 3—5. *That they may not see the sun* (A.V.) is an ungrammatical rendering.

9. The general sense of the verse is clear, though the second line is extremely obscure and possibly corrupt. The first line certainly means, *Before your pots can feel the thorns* (possibly a proverbial expression), and the verb in the second line means, *He shall sweep them* (or, *it*) *away with a whirlwind*. It is another figure for the swift destruction of the wicked and their schemes, taken from the experience of travel in the

10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance:
He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.

desert. The travellers have lighted a fire of dry thorns or brambles under their cooking pots. It blazes up rapidly, but even so, before the pots are heated and the meat in them cooked, a sudden whirlwind sweeps away the fire and undoes their work. The fire represents the malicious will of the evildoers, the pots with the meat the plans which they are devising: but let them work never so rapidly, the whirlwind of divine judgement will annihilate their schemes.

The crux of the verse is in the words rendered in A.V. *both living and in* his *wrath*. They have been supposed to refer to the thorns, *the green and the burning alike:* or to the flesh in the pot, *the raw flesh and the sodden alike:* or to the flesh and the fire, *the raw flesh and hot embers alike:* but all these interpretations break down on the fact that *chărōn*, though not a rare word, always means *the burning wrath of God*. It seems necessary either to omit the word *k'mō*, 'as,' before *chărōn*, or to read *b'mō*, 'in,' instead of it (כְּמוֹ for בְּמוֹ). We may then render, **Like raw flesh** (=perhaps, *while the flesh is yet raw*), **shall Wrath sweep them away with a whirlwind**; or, **shall He sweep them away with a whirlwind in wrath**. The pronoun for *them* is in the singular, and may mean each one of the wicked, or perhaps rather *it*, the whole scheme. For a figure from cooking cp. Hos. vii. 4 ff.: for the thorn fires Is. xxxiii. 12; Eccl. vii. 6; and for the whirlwind of divine wrath see l. 3, "it shall be very tempestuous round about him"; Job xxvii. 21.

10, 11. The issues of the judgement: the righteous rejoice in the discomfiture of their oppressors: men in general recognise the reality of God's moral government of the world.

10. *The righteous shall rejoice* &c.] On the moral aspects of the triumph of the godly at the just punishment of the wicked see note on v. 11, and generally, *Introd.* pp. lxxxviii ff. It is important to observe that the rejoicing of the righteous is at the vengeance which God has taken upon the wicked, and that that vengeance is only taken upon those who have wilfully and obstinately resisted every effort for their reformation (*vv.* 4, 5). God has proclaimed, "Vengeance is mine" (Deut. xxxii. 35; cp. Nah. i. 2); in other words the time must come when evil can no longer be tolerated but must be extirpated (2 Thes. i. 8); and the righteous cannot but rejoice at the triumph of good over evil and the proof that God is true to His revealed character as a just Judge and sovereign Ruler. It is not for them to usurp God's function and avenge themselves, but they must rejoice when right is vindicated. In the O.T. that joy took a concrete form which is repugnant to us, who have learned to distinguish between the sinner and his sin: it is not the spirit of the Gospel: but we may well beware lest the right feeling of moral indignation, not only against wrong in the abstract but against the wrong-doer, should be weakened.

he shall wash his feet &c.] The metaphorical and hyperbolical lan-

So that a man shall say, Verily *there is* a reward for the 11
righteous:
Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

guage of a warlike age. Cp. Ps. lxviii. 23; and for a similar metaphor see Job xxix. 6.

11. *So that a man shall say*] Rather, **So that men shall say**: the mass of men, who are neither 'righteous' nor 'wicked,' but as it were spectators of the conflict between the righteous and the wicked.

Verily] This particle expresses the recognition of a truth which has been obscured or questioned: 'after all,' 'surely.' Cp. lxxiii. 1.

a reward] Lit. *fruit*. Cf. Is. iii. 10. Their patient continuance in well-doing bears its harvest in due time (Gal. vi. 9).

verily he is a God] Better, **Verily there is a God** (R.V.). Contrary however to the general usage when GOD is spoken of, the predicate is in the plural: and perhaps *Elōhīm* is meant to be taken somewhat more vaguely, in parallelism and contrast to the judges of *vv.* 1, 2—the contrast holds whether *ēlīm*, 'gods,' is read in *v.* 1 or not—as *Divine Powers*. But the reading is not above suspicion. The LXX and Syr. have *that judgeth them*, i.e. does the righteous justice (xliii. 1), the final *m* being read as the pronominal suffix, not as the sign of the plural[1].

For like confidence in the final manifestation of God's judgement see vii. 11 ff.; ix. 7 ff., 19; xi. 4 ff.; and cp. Lk. xviii. 7 ff.

PSALM LIX.

This Psalm is another prayer for deliverance from virulent enemies who are threatening the Psalmist's life. It consists of two principal divisions (1—9, 10—17) each ending with a refrain. These are again subdivided; the end of the first stanza in each being marked by a *Selah*, and the initial verse of the second (6, 14) being the same.

i. (1) In peril of his life from truculent enemies the Psalmist cries for help (1, 2). Emphasising the fact that their attack is unprovoked, he prays Jehovah to interpose and punish all the antagonists of His people (3—5).

(2) He describes the menacing behaviour and the scornful godlessness of his enemies (6, 7), and declares his confidence that Jehovah will treat them with sovereign contempt (8, 9).

ii. (1) Starting from the height of this confidence (*v.* 10) he prays that they may be humbled, yet not utterly destroyed, but left for a warning example, till their own sin proves their ruin (11, 12), and their final disappearance demonstrates the sovereignty of Jacob's God (13).

[1] They must have found שׁפטם written defectively and read *shōph'tām* not *shōph'tīm*.

(2) Returning to the present, he contrasts the baffled rage of his pursuers (14, 15) with his own hymns of thanksgiving for deliverance (16, 17).

Thus the Psalm strikes the familiar note of unshaken trust in God under circumstances of danger and difficulty. Its constant recurrence in the Psalter is doubtless intended to provide a large variety of comfort and encouragement for the various circumstances of trial to which the godly are exposed.

But what were the actual circumstances of the Psalmist? According to the title the Psalm refers to the occasion in David's life "when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him." The narrative in 1 Sam. xix. 8 ff relates that after Saul's unsuccessful attempt upon his life David fled and escaped. "And it came to pass that night" (so we should read with the LXX) "that Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch it, that he might slay him in the morning." Michal however contrived to effect his escape by letting him down through a window.

There is much in the Psalm which suits David's situation. Not on that particular night only but for some time previously his life had been in danger. Saul had spoken "to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should slay David" (1 Sam. xix. 1); and doubtless there were men (*v.* 3) in Saul's retinue ready to curry favour with their master by secretly despatching him, treacherous ruffians who might well be compared to the hungry and savage dogs which infest oriental towns. David's enemies had been using the weapons of false and cruel calumny with the view of effecting his ruin. With *vv.* 7, 12 cp. 1 Sam. xxiv. 9; xxvi. 19. Again and again he protested his innocence and the groundlessness of the persecution he was suffering. With *vv.* 3, 4 cp. 1 Sam. xx. 1; xxiv. 11; xxvi. 18 ff; and Ps. vii.

The connexion of the Psalm with this episode in David's life is however commonly set aside on the ground that the Psalmist's foes are described as foreigners (*vv.* 5, 8), and 'my people' (*v.* 11) seems to imply that he is a king or at least in a position of authority.

Ewald supposed that the Psalm was written by Josiah when Jerusalem was threatened by the marauding bands of the Scythians; others have attributed it to Nehemiah, when he was hindered in his work of rebuilding the walls by the Samaritans and their confederates (Neh. iv. 1 ff, 7 ff; vi. 1 ff). But neither of these conjectures is satisfactory. The enemies appear to be personal; one of their chief weapons is calumny; it is the Psalmist's life which is in danger, rather than the city, or the cause which he represents.

It is indeed not quite certain (see the notes) that the 'heathen' of *vv.* 5, 8, are the Psalmist's own immediate enemies: but if they are, the data do not seem to be entirely consistent. Is it possible that we have here a Psalm written by David, or possibly by some later poet, with reference to the occasion stated in the title, and subsequently adapted for liturgical use by the introduction of prayers for the judgement of the enemies of the nation?

To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David; when Saul sent, and they watcht the house to kill him.

Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: 59
Defend me from them that rise up against me.
Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, 2
And save me from bloody men.
For lo, they lie in wait for my soul: 3
The mighty are gathered against me;
Not *for* my transgression, nor *for* my sin, O LORD.
They run and prepare themselves without *my* fault: 4
Awake to help me, and behold.
Thou therefore, O LORD God *of* hosts, the God of Israel, 5
Awake to visit all the heathen:
Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah.

1—5. The Psalmist prays for deliverance from the enemies who are bent on taking his life, pleading his innocence, and appealing to God to punish all injustice.

1. *Deliver me*] So vii. 1, and frequently.

defend me] Better, as R.V., **set me on high** (xx. 1; xci. 14). It is the verb from which is derived the epithet 'high tower' so often applied to God (*vv.* 9, 16, 17; xviii. 2; xlvi. 7, 11).

2. *from bloody men*] Better, **from bloodthirsty men** (v. 6; lv. 23; cxxxix. 19; Prov. xxix. 10).

3, 4. **For, lo, strong ones have laid wait for my life,**
They gather themselves together against me,
For no transgression or sin of mine, Jehovah.
For no iniquity (of mine) they run and station themselves:
Arouse thee to meet me, and behold.

Observe the tenses. Secret plots (cp. Prov. i. 11; Mic. vii. 2) have long been going on: now they are preparing a more open attack (liv. 3; lvi. 6). In this crisis he calls upon God to arouse Himself from His apparent slumber of indifference (xliv. 23), and 'meet him' as with an army of relief. For 'behold' (lit. *see*) cp. x. 14; xxv. 18; xxxi. 7.

The transgression, sin, iniquity, of which he protests his innocence, might refer to offences against God, for which this persecution might have been sent as a punishment (1 Sam. xxvi. 19); but more probably they refer to offences against his persecutors. Their hostility is unprovoked. Exactly the same words are used by David in protesting his innocence of treasonable designs against Saul, 1 Sam. xx. 1; xxiv. 11.

5. **Yea, do Thou, Jehovah, the God of hosts, the God of Israel,**
Awake to visit all the nations:
Be not gracious to any treacherous workers of iniquity.

THOU is emphatic, and the address virtually means, 'since Thou art God of hosts, and God of Israel.' The first title implies that He has

6 They return at evening:
They make a noise like a dog,
And go round about the city.
7 Behold, they belch out with their mouth:
Swords *are* in their lips:
For who, *say they*, doth hear?

the power (xlvi. 7, note), the second that He is under the obligation, to interpose and 'visit,' hold inquisition concerning, the nations, to punish them for their offences. But who are meant by the 'nations' or 'heathen'? Are they the enemies against whom the Psalmist is praying, and identical with the 'treacherous workers of iniquity,' mentioned in the next line? If so, the Psalmist's enemies are foreigners, for usage does not justify the interpretation of *gōyīm* as 'heathenishly minded men'; and if the Psalm is in its original form, it cannot have been written by David with reference to Saul and his myrmidons. But it is possible that, as in Ps. vii, the prayer for a judgement upon personal enemies is expanded into a prayer for a judgement upon all the enemies of Israel: and in that general judgement the treacherous Israelites who are iniquitously plotting against the Psalmist's life will meet their due reward. Similarly in *v.* 8, 'them' will refer to the Psalmist's personal enemies, 'the heathen' or 'nations' to the enemies of Israel. It is also possible, as has been suggested above, that the Psalm has been altered for liturgical use.

The anomalous form of the combination *Jehovah the God of hosts* here and in lxxx. 4, 19; lxxxiv. 8 (*Jehovah Elohim Tsebāōth* not *Jehovah Elōhē Tsebāōth*) makes it probable that the original reading was simply *Jehovah of hosts*, and that *God* is the substitution of the Elohistic editor for *Jehovah*, which however has survived or has been restored along with it.

Be not gracious is the opposite to the Psalmist's prayer for himself, lvi. 1, lvii. 1.

6—9. Be his enemies never so threatening and insolent, he can trust in God.

6. He compares his enemies to a troop of savage and hungry dogs (xxii. 16) such as still infest Oriental towns, in the day-time sleeping in the sun or slinking lazily about, but as night comes on collecting together, and traversing the streets in search of food, howling dismally. P.B.V. *grin* means 'snarl.' Cp. Shakespeare, 2 *Hen. VI*, iii. 1. 18, quoted in Wright's *Bible Word-Book*,

> "Small curs are not regarded when they *grin*;
> But great men tremble when the lion roars."

7. The figure of *v.* 6 is dropped. A flood of cursing and falsehood (*v.* 12) pours from their mouth (Prov. xv. 2, 28); they menace him with death, or openly boast that he will soon be got rid of; cp. lii. 2, note.

'Say they' is rightly inserted. 'Who doth hear'? is not the Psalmist's

But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them; 8
Thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.
Because of his strength will I wait upon thee: 9
For God *is* my defence.

The God of my mercy shall prevent me: 10
God shall let me see *my desire* upon mine enemies.

complaint that there is no one to take his part, but the scornful sneer of his enemies, who do not believe that God cares for His servant. Cp. x. 4, 11, 13; lxiv. 5; lxxiii. 11; xciv. 7.

8. The verbs are the same as in ii. 4: cp. xxxvii. 13; Is. xxxvii. 22. The bold phrase "expresses generally the truth that the machinations of God's enemies are not less absurd than wicked." *Speaker's Comm.*

For the meaning of 'heathen' or 'nations,' see note on *v.* 5.

9. O my strength, unto thee will I watch:
For God is my high tower.

His enemies are 'strong' (*v.* 3); but God is his strength; they watch his house (title), but he will 'watch unto God,' waiting in faith for His help; he has prayed that God will 'set him up on high,' and he is confident of an answer, for God Himself is his 'high tower' of refuge.

The A.V. 'because of *his strength*' follows the Massoretic Text; but some MSS., the LXX, Vulg., Jer., and Targ., read, as in *v.* 17, *my strength*, which is doubtless right. P.B.V. retains *my* from the Vulg., though adopting an impossible rendering, 'My strength will I ascribe unto thee.' It is unnecessary to follow the Syr. in reading as in *v.* 17. *I will make melody*, for *I will watch;* but possibly the words *the God of my lovingkindness* originally stood at the end of this verse as well as of *v.* 17. See note on *v.* 10.

10—13. His enemies will be punished: yet let them not be utterly destroyed forthwith, but kept awhile for a warning, till they perish through their own iniquity, an evidence of the sovereignty of God.

10. The *Kthībh*, with which the LXX agrees, has *My God shall meet me with His lovingkindness:* but the *Qrē* is, *The God of my lovingkindness shall meet me.* This variety of reading possibly points to an original text, in which *v.* 9 ended with the words, *the God of my lovingkindness*, and *v.* 10 began, *His lovingkindness* (or, *My God with his lovingkindness*) *shall meet me.* Cp. lxxix. 8. The loss of the words would be easily accounted for by the similarity between the end of *v.* 9 and the beginning of *v.* 10. Cp. note on xlii. 5, 6.

shall prevent me] **shall come to meet me**; in answer to the prayer of *v.* 4. For the archaism *prevent* cp. xxi. 3.

shall let me see my desire] Cp. liv. 7, note. The same phrase occurs on the Moabite Stone, where Mesha says that he erected the high place to Chemosh, "because he let me see my desire upon all that hated me."

upon mine enemies] **Upon them that lie in wait for me.** See note on liv. 5.

11 Slay them not, lest my people forget:
Scatter them by thy power;
And bring them down, O Lord our shield.
12 *For* the sin of their mouth *and* the words of their lips
Let them even be taken in their pride:
And for cursing and lying *which* they speak.
13 Consume *them* in wrath, consume *them*, that they *may* not *be:*
And let them know that God ruleth in Jacob
Unto the ends of the earth. Selah.

11. *Slay them not*] Apparently inconsistent with *v.* 13; but burning indignation does not study logical consistency. What he desires is that they may not be destroyed outright by some signal catastrophe, but visibly punished as a living example, until at last their own wickedness proves their destruction. Cp. Ex. ix. 15, 16 (R.V.). Pharaoh might have been cut off at once, but was suffered to exist, till his obstinate resistance sealed his doom, and enhanced God's sovereignty. The Fathers applied the words to the Jews in their dispersion, scattered but not consumed, an ever visible memorial of divine judgement.

scatter them by thy power] Rather, make them wander to and fro by thine army, as vagabonds and outcasts (cix. 10; Gen. iv. 12, 14; Num. xxxii. 13). The word rendered *by thy power* in A.V. is never used of God's might, but may mean (cp. Joel ii. 25; iii. 11) the heavenly army which God has at His command. Cp. xxxv. 5, 6.

bring them down] Cp. lv. 23; lvi. 7.

our shield] The Psalmist speaks as the representative of the nation, or at least of a class. For the metaphor cp. iii. 3; Gen. xv. 1; Deut. xxxiii. 29; Ps. xviii. 2; &c.

12. The A.V. gives the sense, though the precise construction is doubtful. Perhaps, *The word of their lips is the sin of their mouth*, i.e. every word they utter is sin: or, *O the sin of their mouth! O the word of their lips! let them* &c.

let them even be taken] Caught in their own snare, their plots recoiling on themselves. Cp. ix. 15; xxxv. 8; Prov. xi. 6.

in their pride] The atheistic self-sufficiency which says, Who doth hear? Cp. x. 4.

13. *Consume* them *in wrath, consume* them] For the emphatic repetition cp. lvii. 1, 7, 8; and for the wrath of divine judgement cp. lvi. 7.

that they may *not* be] Better as R.V., that they be no more.

and let them know] It is best to regard the subject of the verb as indefinite, *let men know*; and to connect *unto the ends of the earth* with this clause. Let it be known throughout the length and breadth of the world. Cp. 1 Sam. xvii. 46: 'that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.' The P.B.V. 'that it is God that ruleth in Jacob, and unto the ends of the world,' gives an equally good sense, but requires the insertion of the conjunction.

And at evening let them return; 14
And let them make a noise like a dog,
And go round about the city.
Let them wander up and down for meat, 15
And grudge if they be not satisfied.
But I will sing of thy power; 16
Yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning:
For thou hast been my defence
And refuge in the day of my trouble.
Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: 17
For God *is* my defence, *and* the God of my mercy.

14—17. The Psalmist contrasts the baffled rage of his persecutors with his own calm trust in God.

14. A repetition of *v.* 6. But is it (1) as the A.V. appears to take it, an ironical repetition as a curse? let them do now perforce what they did before in malice and wantonness, wandering to and fro (cp. *v.* 11) in unsatisfied hunger. Or is it (2) a reiterated description of the writer's present situation, introduced here to emphasise the contrast of his own security under Jehovah's protection? The second alternative is preferable, as giving full force to the emphatic *they* (*v.* 15) and *But I* (*v.* 16). Render,

And though they return at evening, howl like dogs, and go round about the city,
Though they wander to and fro for meat,
And tarry all night if they be not satisfied;
Yet as for me, I shall sing &c.

The prey of which they were in quest was the Psalmist himself. Disappointed in their attempt they might tarry all night, yet he is confident that the dawn will see him still safe, and bring fresh occasion for praise. The A.V. *grudge*, i.e. murmur, follows the LXX and Jer.; but the contrast 'in the morning' (*v.* 15) is in favour of R.V. (cp. A.V. marg.) **tarry all night.**

16, 17. Render,

Yet as for me, I shall sing of thy strength;
Yea, I shall sing aloud of thy lovingkindness in the morning:
For thou hast been a high tower for me,
And a refuge in the day of my distress.
Unto thee, O my strength, will I make melody,
For God is my high tower, the God of my lovingkindness.

Thou hast been, for in the language of faith he looks back upon the deliverance from the morning of peace which succeeds the night of anxiety.

The refrain is slightly varied from *v.* 9: the patient waiting of the night is changed into the joyous song of the morning.

PSALM LX.

According to the title this Psalm refers to an event in the wars of David, "when he was contending with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, and Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the Valley of Salt twelve thousand." David's conquest of Edom is recorded in 2 Sam. viii. 13 f. but (see note on the passage in this series) the text of *v.* 13 is certainly corrupt, and we should probably read, "And David got him a name when he returned from smiting the Syrians and smote of Edom in the Valley of Salt eighteen thousand." It has been most plausibly conjectured (see Ewald, *Hist.* iii. 156, E.T.) that while David was fully occupied in the north with the Syrian war, the Edomites seized the opportunity for invading the south of Judah, and inflicted serious damage. Had their plans been entirely successful, David's victories in the north would have been rendered useless. It was a critical moment; but David promptly detached a force, which routed the Edomites with great slaughter in the Valley of Salt. This was the valley to the south of the Dead Sea, which was the ancient border between Judah and Edom, and was the scene of another victory over Edom in the reign of Amaziah (2 Kings xiv. 7). The victory was followed up by the complete subjugation of the country. From an incidental notice in 1 Kings xi. 15, 16 we learn that the war was pursued with relentless severity. The signal vengeance which was taken upon Edom is more readily intelligible if the Edomites had attempted to use the opportunity of David's absence for striking a deadly blow at Judah. The phrase "gat him a name" (i.e. won renown) in 2 Sam. viii. 13 may refer to the admiration excited by the skill and promptitude with which David met the sudden danger to his kingdom.

The Psalm may be supposed to have been written at the moment when David received the news of the defeat inflicted by Edom, and was despatching Joab to repel the invaders. It was an anxious crisis; for it must have seemed doubtful whether these reverses in the south would not compel him to abandon his conquests in the north, and might not even endanger the safety of the kingdom.

That the victory over Edom is attributed to David in 2 Sam., to Abishai in 1 Chr. xviii. 12, and to Joab in the title of the Psalm, need cause no difficulty. David was concerned in it as king, and to his military genius may have been due the plan of the campaign and the promptitude of action; Joab was the commander-in-chief of the army; Abishai may have led the division which was sent forward in advance. The variation between *twelve thousand* here and *eighteen thousand* in 2 Sam. and 1 Chron. is probably due to a textual error.

Aram-naharaim, or Syria of the two Rivers, was probably not Mesopotamia, but the country between the Euphrates and Chaboras, or in the neighbourhood of these rivers. It is not mentioned in 2 Sam. viii, but in 2 Sam. x. 16, it is said that Hadadezer brought into the field the Syrians that were beyond the River (Euphrates), and in 1 Chr. xix. 6 Aram-naharaim (A.V. Mesopotamia) is mentioned along with Zobah. The exact position of Zobah is uncertain: it seems to have been north-

east of Damascus and south of Hamath, between the Orontes and the Euphrates.

The accuracy of the title has been questioned upon various grounds. It is not a valid argument against it that 2 Sam. does not mention such a disaster as that to which the Psalm refers. Reverses would not be recorded in the brief summary of David's victories which is all that the history gives; and an invasion which for the moment seemed most alarming would fade into insignificance when the danger was past. The hypothesis of such an invasion certainly explains and connects the fragmentary notices in Samuel and Kings. Nor does the Psalm necessarily imply a prolonged period of disaster. An attack which imperilled the safety of the kingdom would quite account for the language of *vv.* 1 ff.

Numerous conjectures as to the occasion of the Psalm have been proposed by commentators who reject the title. Some would connect it with Amaziah's war with Edom (2 Kings xiv. 7). Not a few would bring it down to the Maccabaean times, chiefly on the ground of its relation to Ps. xliv in tone and language (cp. xliv. 9 with *v.* 10). But none of the occasions in that period with which it has been connected is really suitable, and it has already been shewn in the Introd. to Ps. xliv that the history of the formation of the Psalter makes it difficult to suppose that Maccabaean Psalms are included in the Elohistic collection. It may reasonably be maintained that the situation indicated in the title explains the Psalm more satisfactorily than any alternative which has been suggested.

The Psalm is to be sung to the melody known as *Shushan-eduth*, that is, *The lily of testimony*. Cp. the title of Ps. lxxx, *set to Shoshannim-Eduth*, and also those of Pss. xlv, lxix. It is intended *for teaching*, probably, like David's elegy on Saul and Jonathan, to be committed to memory for recitation. Cp. Deut. xxxi. 22.

vv. 5—12 form the second part of the composite Ps. cviii.

The Psalm may be divided into three stanzas as follows:

i. David expostulates with God for abandoning His people to disaster and defeat (1—4).

ii. He appeals to God's promise to apportion the land to His people, and give them dominion over the neighbouring nations (5—8).

iii. Though God has for the time deserted His people it is He alone Who can help; and to Him David turns in confident assurance of victory (9—12).

To the chief Musician upon Shushan-eduth, Michtam of David, to teach; when he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, when Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand.

O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, 60

1—4. Grave disasters have befallen Israel through God's displeasure.

1. *thou hast cast us off*] Cp. *v.* 10; xliv. 9, 23; lxxiv. 1; lxxvii. 7; lxxxix. 38.

thou hast scattered us] Better as R.V., **thou hast broken us down**, a word applied to defeat (2 Sam. v. 20), or any great calamity (Jud. xxi. 15;

Thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again.
2 Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it:
Heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh.
3 Thou hast shewed thy people hard *things*:
Thou hast made us to drink the wine *of* astonishment.
4 Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee,
That *it* may be displayed because of the truth. Selah.

Job xvi. 14). It is a metaphor from the destruction of a wall or a building (2 Kings xiv. 13; Is. v. 5).

thou hast been displeased] R.V. rightly, thou hast been angry. as A.V. elsewhere (ii. 12; lxxix. 5; 1 Kings viii. 46; &c.). Israel's neighbours used exactly the same language. Mesha in the inscription known as the Moabite Stone says that Omri the king of Israel oppressed Moab many days, "because Chemosh was angry with his land" (*l.* 5).

O turn thyself to us again] Better, O grant us restoration.

2. *Thou hast made* &c.] R.V. Thou hast made the land to tremble; thou hast rent it. The disaster is compared to an earthquake, which is often used as a symbol of great catastrophes and especially of divine judgement (xviii. 7; xlvi. 3, 6; Is. xxiv. 18 ff). 'The breaches' may be the rents and rifts in the solid ground, or by a very natural transition, the state is further compared to the buildings shattered by the earthquake and threatening to fall (lxii. 3; Is. xxx. 13; and for *heal*=repair, see Jer. xix. 11).

3. *hard*] i.e. calamitous.

the wine of astonishment] Better as R.V., the wine of staggering. The cup of God's wrath is a common metaphor for His judgements. It is like some drugged potion, which robs the drinker of reason, and makes him reel helplessly along, the mockery of all beholders. Commonly it is administered to the enemies of Israel (lxxv. 8; Jer. xxv. 15 ff); but also to Israel itself (Is. li. 17, 21 f).

4. *That* it *may be displayed because of the truth*] With this rendering, which has been retained in the text of the R.V., the verse becomes the preface to the following prayer. Israel is charged with the maintenance of God's cause, therefore let Him help them against the heathen. But it is decidedly preferable (cp. R.V. marg.) to follow the LXX, Vulg., Symm., and Jer. in rendering, That they may betake themselves to flight from before the bow (cp. Is. xxxi. 8). The verse then forms the conclusion of the first stanza of the Psalm. By 'them that fear thee' Israel is meant; and the word implies that Israel is loyal to Jehovah (cp. xlv. 17 ff). He has 'given them a banner' (cp. Is. v. 26; xiii. 2; Jer. iv. 6), raised a standard to summon them to fight for His cause (for the cause of the nation was the cause of its God), in order that they should be put to flight before the enemy's archers. The words are reproachfully sarcastic, and there is no need to weaken the sarcasm by inserting *only* before *that they may betake themselves to flight*. God has deliberately mustered His people and led them forth to defeat. They recall (though their spirit is wholly different) the complaint of the

That thy beloved may be delivered;
Save *with* thy right hand, and hear me. 5
God hath spoken in his holiness; 6
I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem,
And mete out the valley of Succoth.

Israelites in the wilderness, "Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us" (Deut. i. 27).

The view that *vv.* 1—4 form the first stanza of the Psalm is confirmed by the position of *Selah*, by the commencement of the extract in Ps. cviii with *v.* 5, and by the symmetry of structure which is given by a division at this point.

5—8. A prayer for deliverance and victory, based upon God's promise to give Israel the possession of Canaan, and supremacy over the neighbouring nations.

5. *thy beloved*] *Thy beloved ones* (plur.) are Israel. Cp. Deut. xxxiii. 12; Jer. xi. 15. God's love for Israel is the counterpart to Israel's fear of God.

save] i.e. give victory. Cp. *v.* 11.

hear me] Answer me. The *Kĕthîbh* has *us*, which R.V. adopts; but the *Qrê* is *me*. This has the support of the Ancient Versions and is preferable. David is the speaker. Cp. *v.* 9.

6. *in his holiness*] Or, by his holiness, for 'spoken' is the equivalent of 'promised' or 'sworn.' Cp. lxxxix. 35; Am. iv. 2. God's 'holiness' includes His whole essential nature in its moral aspect, and that nature makes it impossible for Him to break His promise (Num. xxiii. 19; Tit. i. 2). It is equivalent to 'Himself' (Am. vi. 8; Heb. vi. 13, 17 f). 'In his sanctuary' (cp. lxiii. 2) is a possible but less probable rendering.

I will rejoice] Better as R.V., I will exult. But who is the speaker? Is it David or God? The latter alternative is certainly preferable. The language is bold, but not bolder than that of Is. lxiii. 1 ff. God is represented as a victorious warrior, conquering the land, and portioning it out to His people. The language recalls the conquest of the land under Joshua (Josh. xviii. 10); but it certainly does not imply that the land was now permanently in the possession of foreigners, and needing to be reconquered. He makes Ephraim the chief defence of His kingdom, and Judah the seat of government, and treats the neighbouring nations as His vassals. It is possible that some actual oracle is quoted, but more probable that the drift of the great promise to David (2 Sam. vii. 9 f) is freely reproduced in a poetical form. Cp. ii. 7; lxxxix. 19.

Shechem...the valley of Succoth] Shechem, as a central place of importance, represents the territory west of the Jordan; Succoth, 'in the vale' (Josh. xiii. 27), somewhere to the south of the Jabbok, between Peniel and the Jordan, represents the territory east of the Jordan. These two places may be named, because of their connexion with the

7 Gilead *is* mine, and Manasseh *is* mine;
Ephraim also *is* the strength of mine head:
Judah *is* my lawgiver;
8 Moab *is* my washpot;
Over Edom will I cast out my shoe:
Philistia, triumph thou because of me.

history of Jacob, who halted first at Succoth and then at Shechem, when he returned to Canaan (Gen. xxxiii. 17, 18). God will fulfil His promise to Jacob, apportioning to His people the land in which their great ancestor settled.

7. *Gilead* and *Manasseh*, that is the land of Bashan in which half the tribe of Manasseh settled, stand for the territory east of the Jordan and the tribes settled there: Ephraim and Judah stand for the tribes west of the Jordan. God claims all as His own: all therefore can claim God's protection.

Ephraim &c.] Render with R.V.,

Ephraim also is the defence of mine head;
Judah is my sceptre.

Ephraim, as the most powerful tribe and the chief defence of the nation, is compared to the warrior's helmet: Judah, as the tribe to which belonged the Davidic sovereignty, is compared to the royal sceptre, or, as the same word is rendered in R.V. of Gen. xlix. 10, to which the present passage alludes, 'the ruler's staff.'

8. The neighbouring nations are reduced to servitude. In strong contrast to the honour assigned to Ephraim and Judah is the disgrace of Moab and Edom. Moab, notorious for its pride (Is. xvi. 6), is compared to the vessel which is brought to the victorious warrior to wash his feet when he returns from the battle. The old enemy of God and His people is degraded to do menial service: in other words, it becomes a subject and a vassal.

In close connexion with this metaphor the next line may be rendered, **Unto Edom will I cast my shoe**: Edom is like the slave to whom the warrior flings his sandals to carry or to clean. Haughty and defiant Edom (Obad. 3 f.) must perform the duty of the lowest slave (cp. Matt. iii. 11). The R.V. renders, **Upon Edom will I cast my shoe.** This would mean, 'I will take possession of Edom,' in allusion to an Oriental custom of taking possession of land by casting the shoe upon it; but the first explanation agrees best with the context.

Philistia, triumph thou because of me] R.V., **shout thou because of me.** Mighty Philistia must raise the shout of homage to its conqueror. Cp. ii. 11; xviii. 44; xlvii. 1. This rendering is preferable to that of A.V. marg. (with its explanatory note) '*triumph thou over me* (by an irony)': and to the rendering, '*cry aloud in terror.*' But perhaps we should alter the vocalisation and read: *Over Philistia shall be my shout of triumph*, or adopt the reading of cviii. 9, *Over Philistia will I shout in triumph.*

Who will bring me *into* the strong city?
Who will lead me into Edom?
Wilt not thou, O God, *which* hadst cast us off?
And *thou*, O God, *which* didst not go out with our armies?
Give us help from trouble:
For vain *is* the help of man.
Through God we shall do valiantly:
For he *it is that* shall tread down our enemies.

9—12. None but God can give help, and though for the moment He has abandoned His people, He will surely once more lead them to victory.

9. *the strong city*] Probably Sela or Petra, the capital of Edom, famous for its inaccessibility (Obad. 3). See Stanley's *Sinai and Pal.*, p. 89, for a description of the wonderful defile, which in ancient times was the only usual approach to Petra.

Who will lead me into Edom] The verb is in the perfect tense, which is sometimes used in questions to express a sense of difficulty or hopelessness. Who could lead me, or, who could have led me, right into (the preposition is emphatic) Edom? The difficulties are almost insuperable. But possibly the text is faulty. The restoration of one letter with a change in the vocalisation would give the future tense. In any case the rendering of R.V., *Who hath led me unto Edom?* as a reference to some previous successful invasion, does not suit the context.

10. Wilt *not thou, O God* &c.] This rendering, which is that of the LXX, Vulg., Symm., and Jer., is grammatically legitimate, though less obvious than that of R.V.;

Hast not thou, O God, cast us off?
And thou goest not forth, O God, with our hosts.

It suits the context better as the answer to *v.* 9 in a tone of confidence which corresponds to that of *v.* 12. Though God has for the moment deserted us, and has not led our armies to victory, He will surely now give us help, for we trust in Him alone. The rendering of R.V. introduces a note of despair, which harmonises ill with the confidence of *v.* 12. With it the connexion of thought would be, Who can lead us into the enemy's stronghold? None but God, and God has deserted us. Yet even now perhaps He will hear our prayer (*v.* 11). With the second line cp. xliv. 9.

11. *Give us help from trouble*] Or, as R.V., **Give us help against the adversary.** Cp. *v.* 12.

for vain is *the help of man*] Lit. *salvation*. It is a delusion (cp. xxxiii. 17) to look to human strength for victory. See xliv. 6, 7; 1 Sam. xvii. 47; Jer. xvii. 5; and cp. Judg. vii. 4, 7; 1 Sam. xiv. 6; 2 Chron. xiv. 11; 1 Macc. iii. 16 ff.

12. *Through God*] Cp. lvi. 4.

we shall do valiantly] Cp. Num. xxiv. 18; Ps. cxviii. 15, 16.

shall tread down our enemies] Cp. xliv. 5; xviii. 42 (note). R.V., **adversaries**, cp. *v.* 11.

PSALM LXI.

The author of this Psalm is far from Jerusalem. Though his prayers have in part been answered, and he can look forward to his return with confidence, he is still in dispiriting circumstances. He is either a king, or one closely connected with a king and deeply interested in his welfare. At first sight *vv.* 6, 7 seem to favour the latter hypothesis; but inasmuch as the stress in these verses is upon the king's office, not upon his personality, a king might appropriately speak of himself in the third person; and this view best explains the connexion of the verse.

The Psalm belongs therefore to the time of the monarchy; for there is no real ground for supposing that one of the Maccabæan princes, of whom Aristobulus I (B.C. 105) was the first to assume the title of king, is meant. If David was the author, it may best be referred to the time when he was at Mahanaim, after the collapse of Absalom's rebellion, but before his recall to Jerusalem.

The hope of return to "God's dwelling place," which finds such touching expression in this Psalm (*v.* 4), lay deep in his heart as he left the city (2 Sam. xv. 25); *v.* 3 may refer to the hair-breadth escapes of his earlier life; *vv.* 6, 7 allude to the great promise of 2 Sam. vii; the phrase 'God's tent' (*v.* 4) may naturally be connected with the tent which David pitched for the Ark. At any rate David's situation gives point to the Psalm and helps to explain it.

The Psalm is best divided into two equal stanzas.

i. Prayer for support and restoration to God's dwelling-place (1—4).

ii. He appeals to the experience of answered prayer and to the certainty of God's promises to the king, and looks forward with confidence to a life of thanksgiving for God's mercy (5—8).

The Psalm has affinities with Pss xx, xxi, xxvii, xlii, xliii, lxiii, and with Proverbs.

In later times the Psalm was naturally adopted as a prayer of the nation in its dispersion, and the king was interpreted to refer to the Messiah. See the Targum on *vv.* 6, 8.

To the chief Musician upon Neginah, *A Psalm* of David.

61 Hear my cry, O God;
Attend unto my prayer.

Upon Neginath in the title may mean *On a stringed instrument* (R.V.), or *To the accompaniment of stringed music:* or possibly, *Set to the song of...*, some word of definition being lost. See *Introd.* p. xxiv.

1—4. David prays that God will prove Himself a refuge as in time past, and that he may again live in His presence and under His protection in Jerusalem.

1. *my cry...my prayer*] Synonyms often coupled together to express the urgency of supplication. Cp. xvii. 1; 1 Kings viii. 28; Jer. vii. 16; xi. 14.

From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my 2
heart is overwhelmed:
Lead me to the rock *that* is higher than I.
For thou hast been a shelter for me, 3
And a strong tower from the enemy.
I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: 4
I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah.

2. *From the end of the earth*] Perhaps, *from the end of the land*. But Jerusalem, the dwelling-place of God, is for him the centre of the earth. He measures his distance from it not by miles but by the intensity of his yearning to be there, in the place where the visible pledges of God's Presence were to be found.

will I cry] R.V., will I call.

is overwhelmed] Or, fainteth (cxlii. 3).

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I] Lead me up upon a rock that is too high for me to reach by my own unaided efforts. 'Rock' denotes an asylum to be reached, not an obstacle to be surmounted (xxvii. 5). God Himself is such a Rock of refuge (lxii. 2, 6, 7). David's wanderings may have suggested the metaphor (1 Sam. xxiv. 2; 1 Chron. xi. 15).

3. **For thou hast been a refuge for me,**
A strong tower from the enemy (R.V.).

He appeals to past experience. "In Thee have I taken refuge" is the constant cry with which faith approaches God (vii. 1; xi. 1; xvi. 1; xxxi. 1; lvii. 1; lxxi. 1; &c.). In xviii. 2 David addresses God as "my Rock in whom I take refuge." We may see from Jud. ix. 51 what 'a strong tower' meant literally: for the metaphor cp. Prov. xviii. 10.

4. **Let me sojourn in thy tent for ever:**
Let me take refuge in the hidingplace of thy wings.

The words are a prayer. In his banishment he prays that he may once more be received as Jehovah's guest, to enjoy His protection and hospitality, to dwell in the place which He has consecrated by His Presence (xv. 1). *In thy tent* may mean no more than 'in thy abode': but it is natural to connect the metaphor with the 'tent' which David pitched for the Ark on Mount Zion (2 Sam. vi. 17). Cp. xxvii. 5, 6. 'Sojourn' implies the relation of guest to host, and the protection which the guest in Oriental countries claims from his host. "The Arabs give the title of *jār allāh* to one who resides in Mecca beside the Caaba." Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 77.

for ever] All my life. Cp. 1 Sam. i. 22; Ps. xxiii. 6. And the revelation of the Gospel has made it plain that life does not end with death.

For *the hidingplace* (R.V. *covert*) *of thy wings* cp. lvii. 1, note; xxvii. 5, "in the hidingplace of his tent shall he hide me"; xxxi. 20, "Thou shalt hide them in the hidingplace of thy presence." So the Targ. here *in the shadow of Thy Presence* (lit. *Shechinah*).

5 For thou, O God, hast heard my vows:
Thou hast given *me* the heritage of those that fear thy name.
6 Thou wilt prolong the king's life:
And his years as many generations.

5—8. Such prayers David can offer in confidence, for his prayers have already been partially answered. He can look forward in faith to the fulfilment of the promises God has made to His king, and he will spend the rest of his life in grateful thanksgiving.

5. *hast heard my vows*] Vows accompanied by prayers.

thou hast given me *the heritage of those that fear thy name*] *Me* is not in the original; and it is best to supply the remoter object of the verb from the complement of the nearer object, and render with LXX, (Vulg.), Jer., P.B.V., thou hast given (their possession to them that fear thy name. 'Possession' is the term regularly used of Israel's 'occupation' of the land of Canaan (Deut. ii. 19; iii. 18; &c.; Ps. xxxvii. 9, 11, 22, 29, 34). The collapse of Absalom's rebellion has restored the true and loyal Israelites, who shewed their fear of God's name by adhering to the king of His choice, to the possession of their rightful inheritance, from which they were in danger of being expelled.

It is best to regard the perfects not as 'perfects of confidence' that his prayers will surely be heard, but as referring to past experience. The insurrection has been crushed: but the king awaits restoration (*v.* 4).

6. *Thou wilt prolong the king's life*] Lit., *Thou wilt add days to the days of the king.* Cp. 2 Kings xx. 6. From speaking of the people (*v.* 5), David passes to speak of himself. His life had been in danger: but now the danger was over. At first sight the words may seem to be those of another, speaking of David, rather than those of David speaking of himself. But he thus uses the third person because he is speaking of himself in his capacity of king, referring to the promises made to the king as such. Cp. Jer. xxxviii. 5, where Zedekiah says, "The king is not he that can do anything against you" = I, though king, cannot &c.

and *his years*] R.V., his years shall be as many generations. This verse is not a prayer, and the text ought not to be altered to turn it into a prayer. It is a confident appeal to God's promise and purpose. The long life which was one of Jehovah's special blessings under the old covenant (Ex. xxiii. 26; 1 Kings iii. 11; Prov. iii. 2, and often), and which was a natural object of desire when the hope of a future life was all but a blank, was promised specially to the king (xxi. 4). The language is partly hyperbolical, like the salutation "Let the king live for ever" (1 Kings i. 31; Neh. ii. 3); partly it thinks of the king as living on in his descendants (2 Sam. vii. 13, 16, 29; Ps. lxxxix. 29, 36); but words which in their strict sense could apply to no human individual, become a prophecy of One greater than David; and thus the Targum here interprets 'king' by 'King Messiah.' See *Introd.* p.lxxviff; and Introd. to Ps. xxi.

He shall abide before God for ever:
O prepare mercy and truth, *which* may preserve him.
So will I sing *praise* unto thy name for ever,
That I may daily perform my vows.

7. *He shall abide before God for ever*] Rather, **He shall sit enthroned before God for ever**, an allusion to the promise of eternal dominion to the house of David, 'in the presence of God,' enjoying His favour and protection. See 2 Sam. vii. 16 (read with LXX *before me*), 26, 29; Ps. xxi. 6; lxxxix. 36 *b*: and for the pregnant sense of 'sit' cp. ix. 7.

O prepare &c.] **Appoint lovingkindness and truth that they may guard him.** Cp. xl. 11; 2 Sam. xv. 20; Ps. xlii. 8; lxxxix. 14. God's covenant love and faithfulness to His promise are like guardian angels to the king; and the reflection of these attributes of God in his own character and administration will be the safeguard of his throne (Prov. xx. 28).

The word *prepare* ('appoint') is ignored by some of the Ancient Versions (Jer. Aq. Symm.), and variously rendered by others. It is in itself suspicious both for its form and for its position, and perhaps should simply be omitted. Possibly it may be a corruption of the word for 'continually' (xl. 11), or of an emphatic *they* ('Lovingkindness and truth shall continually—or, even they shall—guard him'). Such a statement agrees better with *vv.* 6, 7 *a* than a prayer does.

8. The preservation of a life demands lifelong thanksgiving. Cp. l. 14. If David is the speaker in *vv.* 6, 7, the return to the first person in this resolution is entirely natural: otherwise the transition is harsh.

Very pathetic is the paraphrase of the Targum. "So will I pay my vows in the day of the redemption of Israel, even in the day when King Messiah is anointed to reign."

PSALM LXII.

When Saul was seeking David's life, Jonathan went to him secretly, and "strengthened his hand in God" (1 Sam. xxiii. 16); and when David's followers in a fit of blind exasperation threatened to stone him, he "strengthened himself in Jehovah his God" (1 Sam. xxx. 6). In the face of treacherous plots against his honour and perhaps his life, when his followers are in danger of being carried away by the power of position and wealth, this Psalmist "strengthens himself in God." With triumphant reiteration he dwells upon the thought of all that God is to him—his rock, his strong rock, his high tower, his refuge, his salvation, his hope; and with this trust in God he contrasts the folly of trusting to man and material resources, and the futility of opposing the will of God.

The trustful confidence and courage of the Psalm is worthy of David. If it is his, it may best be referred to the time of Absalom's rebellion.

It has affinities with Ps. iv, which seems to belong to that time. We might indeed have expected more definite allusions to the rebellion; but at any rate the situation of the Psalmist is not wholly dissimilar. Unscrupulous and hypocritical enemies are seeking to depose him from a position of dignity (3, 4); he has a party of followers to whom he can appeal (8), but some of them, in common with many others who are still wavering, are in danger of being seduced by the show of power and the fair promises of his enemies (cp. iv. 6).

Like Ps. xxxix, to which it has several points of resemblance, though the situation is wholly different, this Psalm has the name of Jeduthun in the title, but with a different preposition, which seems to mean after the manner of Jeduthun (R.V.), or possibly, set to some melody composed by or called after Jeduthun. Cp. the title of Ps. lxxvii. Jeduthun, who appears to have been also called Ethan (1 Chr. xv. 17 ff.), is mentioned in 1 Chr. xvi. 41 f; xxv. 1 ff; 2 Chr. v. 12; xxxv. 15, along with Heman and Asaph, as one of the directors of the Temple music.

The structure of the Psalm is regular. It consists of three equal stanzas.

i. God alone is the Psalmist's defence. How long will his enemies plot to ruin him (1—4)?

ii. With slight but significant variations the opening verses are repeated, and those who are on the Psalmist's side are exhorted to trust in God (5—8).

iii. It is vain to trust in man and brute force and material wealth. God is a God of strength and love, which are manifested in the justice of His government (9—12).

To the chief Musician, to Jeduthun, A Psalm of David.

62 Truly my soul waiteth upon God:
From him *cometh* my salvation.
2 He only *is* my rock and my salvation;

1—4. Patiently the Psalmist awaits God's help, and remonstrates with his enemies for their malice and hypocrisy.

1. *Truly*] The particle *ak* is characteristic of this Ps., in which it occurs six times, and of Ps. xxxix. in which it occurs four times. It stands at the beginning of *vv.* 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9. It may be affirmative, 'truly,' 'surely,' or restrictive, 'only.' Either sense will suit, and possibly the shade of meaning may not always be the same; but 'only' appears to be preferable throughout. Literally the line means: *Only unto God is my soul silence;* unto God alone does my soul look in patient calmness, waiting for the deliverance which will surely come, and can come from Him alone. For such 'silent' waiting cp. *v.* 5; xxxvii. 7; xxxix. 2; Lam. iii. 26.

2. The same titles *my rock, my salvation, my high tower,* are combined in xviii. 2. The title *Rock* is frequently used to symbolise the strength, faithfulness, and unchangeableness of Jehovah: here (cp. lxi. 2) with the special thought of an asylum in danger.

He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved. 3
How long will ye imagine mischief against a man?
Ye shall be slain all of you:
As a bowing wall *shall ye be, and as* a tottering fence. 4
They only consult to cast *him* down from his excellency:
They delight in lies:
They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly.
Selah.

I shall not be greatly moved] In other words, "though he may fall he shall not lie prostrate" (xxxvii. 24; cp. Prov. xxiv. 16).

3. *How long*] For the indignant remonstrance cp. iv. 2, noting also the connexion of that verse with vv. 4, 7, 9 of this Psalm. God is on his side; they cannot harm him; how long will they persist in the futile attempt?

will ye imagine mischief against a man?] This rendering, adopted from Jewish authorities by the scholars upon whom Coverdale largely relied, and passing on from him to the later versions, rests upon an impossible derivation. Render with R.V., following LXX and Vulg., will ye set upon a man. The corresponding Arabic word is said to be still used in Damascus in the sense of 'to intimidate,' to threaten with violence.'

ye shall be slain] This is the reading of R. Aaron ben Asher, a famous Jewish scholar of the 10th century, whose authority was generally followed in the West. But the reading of his rival, R. Moses ben Naphtali, which makes the verb active (the difference is one of vowel points only) suits the context better. Render with R.V., **that ye may slay him**, or better still, returning to the primary meaning of the verb in connexion with the metaphor of the next line,

Battering him, all of you,
Like a toppling wall, like a tottering fence.

The blows of calamity have already taken effect, and they are eager to complete his ruin. Wycliffe gives a graphic rendering of the Vulg.; 'a wal bowid, and a wal of stoon with out morter cast down.' "The metaphor of the falling wall is common in Eastern proverbs. 'The wall is bowing,' is said of a man at the point of death. 'By the oppression of the headman the people of that village are a ruined wall.'" (Aglen.)

all of you] In contrast to 'a man'; for though the Psalmist was not alone (*v.* 8) he was the principal object of attack. Cp. 2 Sam. xvii. 1 ff.

4. **Only to thrust him down from his dignity have they taken**
counsel, delighting in a lie:
With his mouth doth each of them bless, but inwardly they
curse.

Their plot is 'a lie,' false in its principle and in its aim (iv. 2, note); and they have been guilty of the grossest hypocrisy and duplicity in promoting it. Cp. xii. 2; xxviii. 3; lv. 21.

5 My soul, wait thou only upon God;
For my expectation *is* from him.
6 He only *is* my rock and my salvation:
He is my defence; I shall not be moved.
7 In God *is* my salvation and my glory:
The rock of my strength, *and* my refuge, *is* in God.
8 Trust in him at all times; ye people,
Pour out your heart before him:
God *is* a refuge for us. Selah.

9 Surely men of low degree *are* vanity, *and* men of high degree *are* a lie:

5—8. The opening verses are repeated, with slight variations, leading up to an exhortation to the Psalmist's sympathisers to trust in God.

5. Only unto God be thou silent, my soul,
For from him cometh my hope.

It is only by constant self-exhortation that the calmness of v. 1 can be maintained, especially when the recollection of his enemies' double-faced behaviour stirs his indignation. Cp. xxxvii. 7. 'My hope' = 'my salvation' (*v.* 1), the deliverance which I look for.

6. *my defence*] **My high tower**, as in *v.* 2.

I shall not be moved] Perhaps the omission of 'greatly' (*v.* 2) marks a growing faith.

7. *In God*] R.V., **With God**, lit. *upon God* (cp. vii. 10, note). It rests with God to deliver him and defend his honour;—his personal reputation and (if the speaker is David) his royal dignity. See iv. 2, note.

is *in God*] **Or, *consists in God*, is God** (*vv.* 6, 8). Cp. Is. xxvi. 4.

8. Render in accordance with the Massoretic punctuation, **Trust ye in him at all times, O people.** He exhorts his faint-hearted followers, who were in danger of being carried away by the show of power on Absalom's side. Cp. 2 Sam. xvii. 2 ff for 'people' used of David's adherents. It is unnecessary to follow the LXX in reading, *Trust ye in him, O whole assembly of the people.*

pour out your heart] Give free vent to your anxieties: make them all known to God. Cp. xlii. 4.

9—12. Trust in God, I say, and not in man or in material force. God's strength and love are the guarantee for the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the righteous.

9. *Surely*] Lit., as before, *only*. **Nought but vanity are men, (nought but) a lie are great men.** Only a mere breath which vanishes, an imposture which deludes those who trust them, are all men, whatever may be their rank. For the phrases *bnē ādām*, *bnē īsh*, 'low' and 'high,' see xlix. 2. In iv. 2 Absalom's followers are termed *bnē īsh:* waverers would be influenced by seeing the number of leading men on his side. The same phrase *nought but vanity* is used in xxxix. 5,

To be laid in the balance, they *are* altogether *lighter* than vanity.
Trust not in oppression, 10
And become not vain in robbery:
If riches increase, set not *your* heart *upon them.*
God hath spoken once; 11
Twice have I heard this;
That power *belongeth* unto God.
Also unto thee, O Lord, *belongeth* mercy: 12
For thou renderest to *every* man according to his work.

11, to describe the transitoriness and unsubstantiality of man, but the point is wholly different.

to be laid in the balance &c.] **In the balances they will go up, they are altogether of vanity.** They spring from and consist of mere breath (Is. xli. 24): put them in the scale, it flies up, for they have no weight or substance. The rendering 'lighter *than vanity*' is possible but less probable.

10. The first two lines (cp. *vv.* 9 *a*, 11 *a*, *b*) are a rhythmical division of what is logically one sentence: 'put not vain trust in oppression and robbery.' Do not rely, for you will only be deceived, upon wealth and material resources amassed by violence and wrong, instead of trusting in God (*v.* 8). It is a warning against the old temptation to follow might rather than right. 'Oppression and robbery' are often coupled. See Lev. vi. 2, 4; Ezek. xxii. 29; and cp. Is. xxx. 12.

if riches increase &c.] Lit. **if riches grow, pay no regard.** The Psalmist addresses those who were in danger of being tempted to covet the power which wealth brings, no matter what might be the means used for obtaining it. There are indications that social discontent was a factor in the momentary success of Absalom's rebellion (iv. 6).

11, 12. Once, yea twice, i.e. repeatedly (Job xxxiii. 14; xl. 5) has God spoken and the Psalmist heard (lxxxv. 8) the double truth which supplies the answer to such temptations;

That strength belongeth unto God,
And that unto thee, O Lord, belongeth lovingkindness.

He has the power and He has the will; therefore those who fear Him have nothing to fear. This he emphatically declares to be a truth of revelation, which he has learnt himself from God. "Scit, potest, vult; quid est quod timeamus?"

The sense will be the same if we render, *One thing hath God spoken, two things there are that I have heard*, and compare for the form of the sentence the numerical proverbs, e.g. Prov. vi. 16 ff; xxx. 15 f.

for thou renderest &c.] The punishment of the wicked and the reward of the faithful attest God's power and love. See Rom. ii. 6 ff, where St Paul quotes the words and expands their meaning.

PSALM LXIII.

The faith which inspires the two preceding Psalms reaches its climax here. At a distance from the sanctuary and in peril of his life, the Psalmist throws himself upon God. What he longs for above all things is the sense of God's presence, as he realised it in the worship of the sanctuary (1, 2). In lifelong thanksgiving for God's love he will find his highest joy and satisfaction (3–5), spending whole nights in meditation upon Him as he recalls the greatness of His past mercies (6, 7). While he draws closer and closer to God, his enemies will be banished into the nether darkness (8, 9). While their corpses lie ignominiously exposed on the field of battle where they fell, he and those who are loyal to God and to him rejoice in God, and all factious opposition is silenced (10, 11).

The Psalm does not admit of clear division into stanzas. Thought follows thought out of the fulness of a loving heart, and the precise connexion of the clauses is often obscure.

Such a Psalm teaches, more effectually than any formal definition, what is meant by a Personal God—a God with Whom the soul can hold converse with the whole force and fervour of a loving devotion. Its lofty spirituality is such as few can reach. But the concluding verses of the Psalm seem to be on a lower level. "We pass all at once into a different atmosphere. We have come down, as it were, from the mount of holy aspirations, into the common everyday world, where human enemies are struggling, and human passions are strong. Yet this very transition, harsh as it is, gives us a wonderful sense of reality. In some respects, it brings the Psalm nearer to our own level. The man who has been pouring out the fervent affection of his heart towards God is no mystic or recluse, lost in ecstatic contemplation, but one who is fighting a battle with foes of flesh and blood, and who hopes to see their malice defeated, their power crushed, and their carcases left to be the prey of jackals in the wilderness" (Bp Perowne). It must be remembered too that the Psalmist felt strongly that his enemies were God's enemies, and looked for their discomfiture, not only as a visible proof of God's favour to himself, but as a manifest token that God had not withdrawn from the government of the world, and was surely, if slowly, establishing His Kingdom among men.

The author of this Psalm was a king, for unless it is of himself as king that he speaks in *v.* 11, it is difficult to understand the relation of the king's rejoicing to the destruction of the Psalmist's enemies (*vv.* 9, 10). He was apparently at a distance from the sanctuary, and was in danger from malicious enemies, whose destruction he looks for on the field of battle. The title ascribes it to David, "when he was in the wilderness of Judah." Since he is already king, it is not to his earlier wanderings (1 Sam. xxiii. 14 ff), but to his flight from Absalom, that this title must be intended to refer. The road to Jericho by which David left Jerusalem led through the northern part of the desert of Judah, and he halted at "the fords of the wilderness" before crossing the Jordan (2 Sam. xv. 23, 28). The graphic narrative in 2 Sam. refers more than once to the privations which the king had to suffer in his hasty flight (2 Sam. xvi. 2,

14; xvii. 29; cp. xvii. 2). The king and his followers were 'weary' in the 'weary land,' which supplied so apt a figure of his spiritual privations. The germ of the Psalm is to be found in the faith and resignation of David's words to Zadok, "Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of Jehovah, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation: but if he say thus, I have no delight in thee; behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him" (2 Sam. xv. 25 f). To part with the visible symbol of God's power and presence argued no common faith: it shewed that he was no slave to the common superstition, which regarded God's favour as tied to the Ark.

Much of the Psalm can certainly be explained from David's situation, and if the reference of the Psalm to David is abandoned, it is idle to speculate as to the author and his circumstances. But whoever he was, the spiritual power and beauty of *vv.* 1–8 remain the same. It is no wonder that the Psalm was adopted by the early Church as its morning Psalm (primarily on the ground of the LXX rendering of *v.* 1), as Ps. cxli was chosen for the evening Psalm. "The Fathers of the Church," says St Chrysostom, "appointed it to be said every morning, as a spiritual song and a medicine to blot out our sins; to kindle in us a desire of God; to raise our souls, and inflame them with a mighty fire of devotion; to make us overflow with goodness and love, and send us with such preparation to approach and appear before God." See Bingham's *Antiquities*, B. xiii. c. 10.

Comp. (beside Pss. lxi, lxii) Pss. xlii—xliii, the companion piece in the Korahite collection.

A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

O God, thou *art* my God; early will I seek thee: 63
My soul thirsteth for thee,
My flesh longeth for thee,

1, 2. Recalling the glorious visions of God which he has enjoyed in the sanctuary, the Psalmist thirsts for a renewed sense of His Presence.

1. *O God, thou* art *my God*] *Elohim, thou art my El.* He addresses Jehovah, for *Elohim* here is the substitute for that Name (cp. cxl. 6), as the Strong One to whom he can appeal with confidence in his need. Cp. xlii. 2, 8, 9; xliii. 4.

early will I seek thee] So the LXX, *πρός σε ὀρθρίζω* (the word used in Luke xxi. 38); and hence the use of the Psalm as a morning Psalm. Rather, however, earnestly will I seek thee; though sometimes (e.g. Is. xxvi. 9) the word seems to be used with allusion to the supposed derivation from *shachar*, 'dawn.'

my soul...my flesh] My whole self, soul and body. Cp. lxxxiv. 2, 'soul, heart, flesh': the emotions, the reason and the will, the physical organism in and through which they act.

thirsteth for thee] See xlii. 2, note; lxxxiv. 2.

longeth for thee] Pineth for thee, a strong word, occurring here only, meaning probably, 'faints with desire.'

In a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;
2 To see thy power and thy glory,
So *as* I have seen thee in the sanctuary.
3 Because thy lovingkindness *is* better than life,
My lips shall praise thee.
4 Thus will I bless thee while I live:

in a dry and thirsty land] In a dry and weary land (Ps. cxliii. 6; Is. xxxii. 2). These words are certainly metaphorical, not literal: it is the 'water of life' for which he thirsts; the spiritual refreshment with which God revives the fainting soul. But the metaphor was naturally suggested by the circumstances in which David was situated.

2. The A.V. transposes the clauses of this verse in a way which cannot be justified. Render:

In such wise have I gazed upon thee in the sanctuary,
To see thy strength and thy glory.

In such wise ('so') is explained to refer to *v.* 1, meaning 'as my God,' or 'so fervently'; but this verse seems rather to give the ground and reason for the preceding verse:—I pine for communion with Thee, because I have had such glorious visions of Thy presence in the sanctuary. There he has 'gazed' upon God - the word is used of an intent and discerning contemplation, specially of things divine (xxvii. 4; xi. 7; xvii. 15), and of prophetic 'vision' (Is. i. 1) in order to realise His Majesty as it is revealed to man. The Ark was the symbol of God's Presence, of His strength and glory (1 Sam. iv. 21; Ps. xxiv. 7, note; lxxviii. 61; cxxxii. 8); and all the ordinances of the sanctuary possessed for him a sacramental meaning. It was thus that Isaiah 'saw the Lord.'

3—5. The joy of grateful praise.

3. *Because thy lovingkindness* &c.] R.V. renders, *for thy lovingkindness* &c., a further reason for the longing of *v.* 1. But it is best to retain the rendering of the A.V. He has waited to see God's power and glory, yet after all it is the lovingkindness of which he has personal experience that tunes his lips to praise. When Moses desired to see God's *glory*, he was granted a revelation of His *goodness* (Ex. xxxiii. 18 ff). It is *better than life*, than that which men count most precious, for without it life would be a desert. His life was threatened, but the danger fades out of sight in the consciousness of God's love. Note the connexion of God's strength and lovingkindness (*vv.* 2, 3), as in lxii. 11, 12.

shall praise thee] Shall laud thee, a different word from that in *v.* 5. The word is supposed to be a proof of the late date of the Psalm, as it is an Aramaic word, and is found elsewhere only in the later parts of the O.T. But it is precarious to argue from a single word, when the remains of Heb. literature are so comparatively scanty.

4. *Thus*] So, as in *v.* 2: cp. lxi. 8: so fervently: in such a spirit of loving gratitude.

while I live] Cp. civ. 33; cxlvi. 2.

I will lift up my hands in thy name.
My soul shall be satisfied as *with* marrow and fatness; 5
And my mouth shall praise *thee with* joyful lips:
When I remember thee upon my bed, 6
And meditate on thee in the *night* watches.
Because thou hast been my help, 7
Therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.
My soul followeth hard after thee: 8
Thy right hand upholdeth me.
But those *that* seek my soul, to destroy *it*, 9

I will lift up my hands] The attitude of prayer (xxviii. 2; cxli. 2; 1 Tim. ii. 8), the outward symbol of an uplifted heart (xxv. 1).

in thy name] Relying upon all that Thou hast revealed Thyself to be. Cp. xliv. 5; John xiv. 13, &c.

5. God feeds the hungry soul with rich and bountiful food (Deut. xxxii. 14; Ps. xxii. 26; xxiii. 5; xxxvi. 8; Is. xxv. 6; lv. 2; Jer. xxxi. 14). Though the language may be derived from the sacrificial feasts, it is indifferent to strict ritual precision, for the fat (A.V. here *marrow*) was never to be eaten, but was to be burnt on the altar as God's portion (Lev. iii. 16, 17).

6, 7. Thankful recollection of past mercies.

6. The A.V. connects this verse with *v.* 5, but the absence of *and* in the second clause makes it preferable to connect it with *v.* 7, thus:

When I remember thee upon my bed,
I meditate on thee in the night watches:
For thou hast been my help,
And in the shadow of thy wings will I shout for joy.

When once he calls God to mind as he lies down to rest, he is so engrossed with the thought of His love that he meditates on it all night long—*per singulas vigilias* (Jer.). The night was divided into three watches by the Israelites (Lam. ii. 19; Jud. vii. 19; 1 Sam. xi. 11); the division into four watches referred to in the N.T. was of Roman origin.

8, 9. While he draws ever closer to God, his enemies will be destroyed.

8. *followeth hard after thee*] Lit., *cleaves after thee;* cleaves to God (Deut. x. 20 &c.) and follows Him (Hos. vi. 3). *Hard*='close.' Cp. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, i. 2. 179, "Indeed my lord, it followed hard upon."

thy right hand &c.] Cp. xvii. 7; xviii. 35; xli. 12; Is. xli. 10. Man's effort is met by God's care (Phil. ii. 13).

9. *But those* &c.] *They*, his enemies, who are seeking his life, are emphatically contrasted with himself (lix. 15; lvi. 6). While his path is upward to God, theirs is downward to the depths of Sheol. It is possible to render (cp. R.V. marg.) *But they shall be destroyed that seek my life, They shall go* &c.

Shall go into the lower parts of the earth.
10 They shall fall by the sword:
They shall be a portion for foxes.
11 But the king shall rejoice in God;
Every one that sweareth by him shall glory:
But the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

into the lower parts of the earth] Into Sheol, swallowed up like Korah and his company of rebels. Cp. for the phrase, Is. xliv. 23; Ezek. xxvi. 20; Ps. lxxxvi. 13; Eph. iv. 9; Deut. xxxii. 22: and for the thought, Ps. ix. 15, 17; lv. 15, 23.

10, 11. While his enemies come to an ignominious end, the king emerges from the struggle, triumphant over all opposition.

10. *They shall fall* &c.] Lit., They shall give him over (lit. *pour him out*) to the power of the sword (Jer. xviii. 21; Ezek. xxxv. 5). The active verb with indefinite subject is practically equivalent to a passive, 'He shall be given over'; yet the idiom suggests the idea of mysterious agents, God's ministers of justice, whose office it is. Cp. Luke xii. 20, R.V. marg. The object of the verb is in the singular, either individualising the king's enemies ('each one of them'), or treating them as one body; but hardly singling out the leader. Cp. lxiv. 8, note.

a portion for foxes] Rather, jackals. "It is the jackal rather than the fox which preys on dead bodies, and which assembles in troops on the battle-fields, to feast on the slain." Tristram, *Nat. Hist.*, p. 110. Their corpses will lie unburied where they fall, to be devoured ignominiously by wild beasts, instead of receiving honourable sepulture. Cp. Is. xviii. 6; Jer. xix. 7.

11. *But the king*] The connexion is unintelligible unless the king is identified with the Psalmist, whose enemies are destroyed. Cp. lxi. 6 ff.

that sweareth by him] Grammatically 'him' may refer to the king or to God, but usage decides that God is meant. Cp. Deut. vi. 13; x. 20; Is. lxv. 16. Those who invoke His Name as the attestation of their oaths are His loyal worshippers; they share the triumph of the king who is His representative.

but the mouth &c.] For the mouth &c. Those who 'speak lies' are those who rebel against God and His king, deluding men by false promises to join an undertaking which is false in its principle and aim. See iv. 2, note; lxii. 4. They are all completely silenced.

Cp. the similar ending of Ps. lxiv. St Paul may have had the phrase in mind in Rom. iii. 19. The context shews how familiar the Psalms were to him.

PSALM LXIV.

The theme of this Psalm is God's judgement upon the enemies of the righteous. It falls into two main divisions, in each of which the verses are arranged in pairs.

i. The Psalmist confidently appeals to God for protection against the secret plots and open attacks of evil-doers (1, 2), who are bent on ruining innocent men by slander and intrigue (3, 4), and flattering themselves that they have nothing to fear, prosecute their designs with an evil inventiveness and determination (5, 6).

ii. But surely and suddenly the arrow of God's judgement will pierce them, and their plots will recoil upon themselves, to the scorn of all beholders (7, 8). In their fate men will recognise the hand of God, and the righteous will rejoice in this proof of His providence (9, 10).

Thus the Psalmist's present and personal need is merged in the larger question of the punishment of the persecutors of the righteous; and the certainty of their punishment as the consequence of their sin is proclaimed in a tone of prophetic authority. The Ps. has its distinctive peculiarities, though numerous parallels of thought and language are to be found in other Psalms. Cp. especially v, vii, x, xi, xii, xiv, xxxvi, lii, lv, lvii, lviii.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer: 64
Preserve my life from fear of the enemy.
Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; 2
From the insurrection of the workers of iniquity:
Who whet their tongue like a sword, 3
And bend *their bows to shoot* their arrows, *even* bitter words:

1—6. Prayer for preservation from malicious enemies, who are plotting against the Psalmist with subtle treachery and resolute determination.

1. *in my prayer*] R.V., **in my complaint**. Cp. lv. 2, 17; 1 Sam. i. 16.

preserve &c.] **From the enemy's terror**—the alarm which he excites—**thou wilt guard my life** (xii. 7; lxi. 7). The common rendering of the verbs in this and the following line as imperatives ('preserve' 'hide'), though legitimate, seems to miss the shade of meaning intended by the change from the imperative 'hear.' From petition the Psalmist passes at once to the language of confident anticipation, such as we find in xvi. 10 f.

2. **Thou wilt hide me from the secret council of evil doers,**
From the tumultuous throng of workers of iniquity.

i.e. from secret machinations and open attack. The cognate verbs are used together in ii. 1, 2 (*tumultuously assemble*, R.V. marg.; *take counsel*). Cp. xxxi. 13. The same words occur in lv. 14, but in a good sense.

3. *Who whet*] R.V., **who have whet**. For the comparison see lv. 21; lvii. 4; lix. 7.

and *bend* &c.] Render, **They have aimed as their arrow a bitter scheme**. For the peculiar phrase see lviii. 7. *Dābār* seems to mean *scheme* as in *v.* 5, rather than *speech*, or *words*. So the LXX πρᾶγμα

4 That *they* may shoot in secret at the perfect:
Suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.
5 They encourage themselves *in* an evil matter:
They commune of laying snares privily;
They say, Who shall see them?
6 They search out iniquities;
They accomplish a diligent search:
Both the inward *thought* of every one *of them*, and the heart, *is* deep.

πικρόν. *Bitter*=hurtful or venomous. Is the idea that of a poisoned arrow? The Targ. paraphrases, "They have anointed their arrows with deadly and bitter venom."

4. *That* they *may shoot*] Cp. **xi. 2.**

in secret] R.V., **in secret places, as x. 8; xvii. 12.**

the perfect] The upright, blameless man, an epithet often applied to Job (i. 1, &c.). Cp. xxxvii. 37; Prov. xxix. 10, and see note on the cognate word in Ps. xv. 2.

fear not] They neither fear God nor regard man. Cp. lv. 19.

5. *They encourage* &c.] Lit., *They make strong for themselves an evil scheme*, sparing no pains to make their plot successful.

they say] Lit. *they have said*, i.e. to themselves; they have made up their minds that there is no retributive Providence in the world. This is the reason of their unrestrained wickedness.

Who shall see them?] An indirect form of speech in place of the direct *Who will see us?* More exactly the Heb. means, *Who will see to them?* They have persuaded themselves that there is no God who will take any account of their proceedings. Cp. **x. 11, 13;** xii. 4; lix. 7; Is. xxix. 15, &c.

6. They plan deeds of iniquity; We have perfected (say they) a consummate plan;
And each man's innermost thought and heart is deep.

The form of the verb is anomalous, and it is uncertain whether it is meant for the first person, or, as A.V. takes it, the third person, 'they accomplish.' The first person is however more graphic and forcible. For a similar abrupt introduction of the persons spoken of as speakers, see lix. 7. The various reading *they have hidden* is improbable. They conceal their thoughts deep in their own hearts, but in vain! God explores the lowest depths and most tortuous labyrinths of the human heart (Jer. xvii. 9, 10). Cp. with this and the preceding verse Is. xxix. 15, "Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from Jehovah, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?" and the sarcastic words of Mic. vii. 3, "Both hands are set to that which is evil to do it well."

7—10. They may scheme, but in the midst of their schemes the arrow of divine judgement pierces them: by this exhibition of God's justice all men are warned, and the righteous are encouraged.

But God shall shoot at them *with* an arrow; 7
Suddenly shall they be wounded.
So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon them- 8
selves:
All that see them shall flee away.
And all men shall fear, 9
And shall declare the work of God;

7. Therefore God shoots at them with an arrow;
Suddenly are they smitten.

The peculiar idiom of the Heb. in this and the following verses conveys the idea that this judgement is the immediate consequence of their conduct, and though still future, is as certain as though it were already historical fact. Lit. *So God hath shot...they have been wounded...and they have been made to stumble...and all men have feared, and they have declared...and understood &c.*: Note the parallelism of this verse to *v.* 4, They aim their arrows at the righteous, unseen, as they fancy, by man, and unregarded by God; but swift retribution overtakes them unawares. Cp. vii. 12 ff. R.V. follows the Massoretic accents in attaching *with an arrow* to the second line; but the balance of the clauses is in favour of dividing the verses as A.V. does, and the parallel with *v.* 4 is more striking if 'suddenly' occupies the same emphatic position at the beginning of the second line as there. Note how their punishment is described in terms of their crime (*vv.* 4, 5).

8. *So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves*] An untenable rendering of an obscure sentence. It is best to render, substantially as R.V., **And they are made to stumble, their own tongue being against them.** Lit. *they make him stumble*: the plural subject to the verb suggesting, as in lxiii. 10, the idea of mysterious agents in God's service, and the singular object regarding 'the enemy' (as in *v.* 1 *b*) collectively as a body. For the sense cp. cxl. 9; vii. 15 f (note that *vv.* 12 f are parallel to *v.* 7 here); lvii. 6. Their tongue, the weapon with which they sought to destroy others, is turned against themselves. Ahithophel's fate may serve for illustration. Possible, but less satisfactory, is the rendering of R.V. marg.: *So shall they against whom their tongue was make them to stumble* The context does not hint that their victims become their executioners.

shall flee away] For fear of sharing their fate (Num. xvi. 34). But the right rendering certainly is, **All that see their desire upon them shall wag the head**, in scornful triumph, as Jer. xlviii. 27, R.V.; cp. Ps. xxii. 7. See lii. 6 ff.; liv. 7; lix. 10. and for the light in which such expressions of satisfaction are to be regarded see note on lviii. 11.

9. *all men*] Upon men in general (cp. lviii. 11) this judgement produces an impression of wholesome fear, in contrast to the profane fearlessness of the ungodly (*v.* 4).

And they declare the work of God,
And understand his operation:

publicly acknowledging that He rules in the world, and interpreting for

For they shall wisely consider of his doing.

10 The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust in him;
And all the upright in heart shall glory.

themselves the meaning of the judgement. For 'work,' 'operation,' cp. xxviii. 5; for 'understand,' cvi. 7; and generally, Hos. xiv. 9.

The P.B.V. *all men that see it* presumes a slightly different and inferior reading.

10. For *the righteous* and *the upright in heart*—the Psalmist and those whom he represents—the judgement is an occasion of joy, supplying a fresh proof that Jehovah governs the world righteously and that in Him they have a sure refuge. Cp. v. 11; lii. 6 ff; lviii. 10 f; lxiii. 11.

and shall trust in him] Rather, take refuge in him (lvii. 1; lxi. 4).

the upright in heart] Cp. xi. 2, already quoted as a parallel to v. 4.

PSALM LXV.

A hymn of praise, intended probably to be sung at the presentation of the firstfruits at the Passover (Lev. xxiii. 10—14) in a year of exceptional promise. It is clear from the allusions to the gathering of the people to the Temple (*vv.* 2, 4) that it was composed for use at one of the great festivals, and as the corn was still in the fields (*v.* 13) the later festivals of Pentecost or Harvest and Tabernacles or Ingathering are excluded.

Was the Psalm written for any special occasion? Not only does the poet see before him the promise of a more than ordinarily bountiful harvest, but the recollection of a great national deliverance seems to be fresh in his mind (*vv.* 5 ff). Accordingly Delitzsch thinks that the spring of the third year foretold by Isaiah (xxxvii. 30), when the retreat of the Assyrians had left the Israelites once more free to till their fields in peace, offers the most appropriate historical basis for the Psalm. This view gains support from the coincidences of thought and language with Ps. xlvi, which belongs to that time, and with Isaiah, as well as from the general similarity of the Ps. to Ps. lxvi, which there are good reasons for connecting with the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrians.

The Psalm consists of three nearly equal stanzas.

i. It is meet that a grateful people should gather in the Temple to offer their praises to the Hearer of prayer to whom all mankind may have access. Sin indeed unfits them to approach God, but He Himself will make atonement for them. In the blessings of His house they will find their highest happiness (1—4).

ii. Israel's God is the one true trust of all mankind. He created and sustains the world; and He controls the nations in it as He controls its natural forces. The signs of His power inspire universal awe and joy (5—8).

iii. And now in particular Israel has to acknowledge God's loving bounty in the rich abundance with which He has blessed the year (9—13).

Some MSS. of the LXX and the Vulg. contain the curious addition to the title; 'a song of Jeremiah and Ezekiel and the people of the captivity (lit. sojourning) when they were about to set forth,' but it does not appear to have been part of the original LXX.

This and the three following Psalms bear the double title *Song* and *Psalm*. Cp. xlviii, lxxv, lxxvi, &c. *Song* is the older term for a hymn intended to be sung in public worship. Cp. Is. xxx. 29; Am. viii. 3.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm *and* Song of David.

Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion: 65
And unto thee shall the vow be performed.
O thou that hearest prayer, 2
Unto thee shall all flesh come.

1—4. It is the duty of a grateful people to render thanks to God in the Temple, assembling to pay its vows to the universal Hearer of prayer. The consciousness of manifold sins might deter them from approaching a holy God, were not He Himself graciously ready to purge their guilt away. In the blessings, of which the welcome to His house is the pledge, is to be found man's truest happiness.

1. *Praise waiteth for thee*] The phrase beautifully suggests the idea of a grateful people, assembled to render thanks to God, and only waiting for the festival to begin. But this can hardly be the meaning of the original. The renderings, *For thee praise is silent*, or, *silence is praise*, give no appropriate meaning, for though prayer may be silent (lxii. 1), praise calls for vocal expression. The R.V. marg., *There shall be silence before thee* and *praise, O God*, involves a harsh asyndeton. It remains to follow the LXX (πρέπει, Vulg. *te decet hymnus*), which preserves a slightly different tradition as to the vocalisation of the Hebrew, and to render, **Praise beseemeth thee, O God, in Zion.**

the vow] Or, collectively, vows. Cp. lxvi. 13; and for vows and praises coupled together see xxii. 25; lxi. 8. At the end of the verse P.B.V. adds *in Jerusalem*, from the LXX (most MSS. though not the Vatican) and Vulg., completing the parallelism, as in cii. 21; cxlvii. 12.

2. *O thou that hearest prayer*] God is thus addressed, because He has given His people cause for the present thanksgiving by hearing their prayers. But the words are more than a reference to a particular answer to prayer. They proclaim that it is His inalienable attribute, His 'nature and property,' to hear and answer prayer.

unto thee shall all flesh come] At first sight the context seems to limit 'all flesh' to Israel, contemplated in its weakness and frailty as needing the strength of God (Joel ii. 28). But it seems more consonant to the spirit of this and the two following Psalms to take it in the wider sense of all mankind. Already the Psalmist beholds the Temple becoming a house of prayer for all nations (Mark xi. 17). It is no

3 Iniquities prevail against me:
As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.
4 Blessed *is the man whom* thou choosest,
And causest to approach *unto thee, that* he may dwell *in* thy courts:
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house,
Even of thy holy temple.

larger hope than was entertained by Isaiah and Micah (Is. ii. 2 ff; Mic. iv. 1 ff) if not by some earlier prophet whom they both quote. Cp. Jer. xvi. 19; Is. xlv. 24; lxvi. 23; Ps. xxii. 27; lxxxvi. 9; xciv. 10.

3. *Iniquities*] Lit., *words*, or, *matters of iniquity*: many various items of iniquity. Cp. for the same phrase cv. 27, cxlv. 5. Virtually the clause is a protasis to the second line:

Though manifold iniquities are too strong for me.
As for our transgressions, Thou wilt purge them away.

In the singular 'me' we may hear the voice of the Psalmist himself, or of some representative of the nation, the king or high-priest, who, like Daniel or Nehemiah, confesses his own sin as well as the sin of his people (Dan. ix. 20; Neh. i. 6: cp. Heb. v. 3, vii. 27): but more probably it is the assembled congregation which speaks of itself first as an individual ('against *me*'), then as an aggregate of individuals ('*our* transgressions'). For a similar change from sing. to plur. cp. Num. xxi. 22, and many other passages. Its sins are an enemy which it cannot defeat (Gen. iv. 7; cp. Ps. xxxviii. 4; cxxx. 3; cxliii. 2); yet God who "forgives iniquity and transgression and sin" will purge away their transgressions. THOU is emphatic. He, and He alone, can do it. The word for *purge away* is that commonly rendered 'make atonement for' (whether its primary meaning is 'to blot out' or 'to cover' is disputed), and it would be natural to see in it an allusion to the Day of Atonement which immediately preceded the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. xxiii. 27, 34), and to suppose that the Ps. was intended for use at that Festival, did not *v.* 13 speak of the corn as still standing in the fields.

4. *Blessed* &c.] Or, Happy is he whom thou choosest, as in i. 1; &c. The language is that which is used of the priests who were 'chosen,' and 'brought near' to God (Num. xvi. 5; cp. Jer. xxx. 21; Zech. iii. 7). Here however it is not limited to the sons of Aaron, but applied to all the nation as 'a kingdom of priests' (Ex. xix. 6). They are God's guests in His house, members of the 'household of God.' The visit to the Temple was for the devout Israelite a sacrament of his membership in God's household, and the sacred feasts symbolised the spiritual blessings prepared by God for His people in fellowship with Him. Cp. xv. 1; xxiii. 5f; xxvii. 4f; xxxvi. 8; lxiii. 5.

we shall be satisfied] Or, O let us be satisfied. Cp. xvii. 15; xxii. 26; lxiii. 5.

even *of thy holy Temple*] Better, as R.V., the holy place of thy temple. See xlvi. 4; and cp. lxiii. 2.

By terrible *things* in righteousness wilt thou answer us, 5
O God of our salvation;
Who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of
them that are afar off *upon* the sea:
Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; 6
Being girded with power:
Which stilleth the noise of the seas, 7
The noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.

5—8. In the future, as in the past. God will prove His righteousness by awe-inspiring acts on behalf of His people in answer to their prayers, for He has created and sustains the universe, and controls the forces alike of nature and of the nations.

5. By *terrible* things &c.] The R.V. gives a better order: **By terrible things thou wilt answer us in righteousness.** As God Himself is 'a terrible God' (xlvii. 2; lxxvi. 7 ff), so His acts are 'terrible,' inspiring His enemies with dread, and His people with reverent awe. The epithet is often applied to the mighty works of the Exodus (Deut. x. 21; 2 Sam. vii. 23; Is. lxiv. 3; Ps. cvi. 22; cxlv. 6); here to all similar deliverances, granted in answer to prayer. 'Righteousness' is the principle of the divine government: and it is closely related to 'salvation'; for by it God's honour is pledged to answer prayer and deliver His people. Cp. xlviii. 10; Is. xli. 10; xlv. 8, 21; li. 5; &c.

who art *the confidence of all the ends of the earth*] R.V. (cp. P.B.V.), **thou that art the confidence** &c. This may mean that He is the object of their unconscious trust, although they know Him not, because it is He who provides for their wants and rules their destinies (lxvii. 4; Amos ix. 7; Acts xvii. 23 ff); but the further thought is certainly included that His mighty deeds on behalf of His people in destroying their tyrannical oppressors will lead all the oppressed and needy throughout the world to turn to Him with a conscious trust. Cp. Is. xxxiii. 13.

and of them that are afar off upon *the sea*] Better, **and of the sea afar off.** A slight change of text would give the phrase of Is. lxvi. 19, *the isles*, or *coastlands*, *afar off*. But the change is unnecessary; land and sea naturally stand for the entire world.

6. *setteth fast the mountains*] The mountains poetically represent the strongest and most solid parts of the earth (xviii. 7; xlvi. 2 f). These He has created and sustains. Comp. the appeals of Amos to the phenomena of nature as the evidence of God's power, iv. 13; v. 8; ix. 5, 6.

being *girded with power*] **Girding himself with might.** Cp. xciii. 1.

7. **Who stilleth the roaring of the seas,**
The roaring of their waves, and the tumult of the peoples.

He controls alike the turbulent elements of nature (Jer. v. 22), and the tumultuous hosts of the nations which they symbolise. Cp. xlvi. 2 f, 6; Is. xvii. 12—14.

8 They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens:
Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.

9 Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it:
Thou greatly enrichest it
With the river of God, *which* is full *of* water:
Thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it.

10 *Thou* waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: *thou* settlest the furrows thereof:
Thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof.

8. *They also* &c.] Better, **So that they who dwell in the ends of the earth are afraid at thy signs.** These mighty works impress them with awe, as 'signs' of the irresistible power of God.

the outgoings of the morning and evening] The term *outgoings* which strictly speaking is appropriate to the east only (xix. 5 f.) is applied, by a kind of zeugma, to the west also. From the furthest east to the furthest west He makes earth with all its inhabitants **to shout for joy** (v. 11; lxvii. 4). Awe gives place to triumph as they watch the downfall of their tyrants and welcome the establishment of God's kingdom of peace (**xlvi. 9 f**), and all nature sympathises with them.

9—13. The special object of the Psalm—thanksgiving for the plenty of the year. First, grateful acknowledgment that the rains which have fertilised the soil were God's gift; then a charming picture of a joyous landscape rich with promise.

9. **Thou hast visited the land, and made it plentiful, greatly enriching it:**
The stream of God is full of water;
Thou preparest their corn, for so thou preparest it.

The A.V. *visitest* turns the special thanksgiving into a general statement. The rendering *waterest* follows the Ancient Versions, which may however have read the word differently. The use of the verb in Joel ii. 24, iii. 13, points to the meaning *made it overflow, made it plentiful*. God's 'stream' (i. 3) is the rain, with which He irrigates the land as out of a brimming aqueduct (Deut. xi. 11; Job xxxviii. 25), providing corn for men by preparing the earth, as the next verse goes on to describe:

10. **Saturating its furrows, levelling its ridges:**
Thou softenest it with showers, thou blessest its springing growth.

The poet looks back upon the 'early rain' of autumn and winter (Nov.—Feb.), which had prepared the ground for the seed and fostered

Thou crownest the year with thy goodness ; 11
And thy paths drop fatness.
They drop *upon* the pastures of the wilderness : 12
And the little hills rejoice on every side.
The pastures are clothed with flocks ; 13
The valleys also are covered over with corn ;
They shout for joy, they also sing.

its growth. It had been abundant, and now (*vv.* 11 ff) he gazes upon crops of unusual promise ripening for the harvest.

11. *Thou crownest* &c.] **Thou hast crowned the year of thy goodness**, added fresh beauty and perfection to a year already marked by special bounty, *and thy paths drop fatness*, rich blessings fall as Thou traversest the land, an allusion probably to an unusually copious fall of the 'latter rain,' which was more uncertain than the early rain, and was most anxiously looked for as a special blessing (Job xxix. 23; Prov. xvi. 15; Jer. iii. 3; Zech. x. 1).

P.B.V. *clouds* (Great Bible, not Coverdale, who has *fotesteppes*) seems to be intended as an explanation of *paths*. Cp. Nah. i. 3.

12. *the pastures of the wilderness*] Jer. ix. 10; xxiii. 10; Joel i. 19, 20; ii. 22. 'Wilderness' denotes the open uncultivated country used for pasturage, in contrast to the cultivated land or 'field.'

and the little hills &c.] R.V., **And the hills are girded with joy.** For the personification of nature cp. xcvi. 11 ff; Is. xliv. 23; &c.

13. The meadows are clothed with sheep;
And the vales are decked with wheat;
They shout for joy, yea sing.

With the last line cp. Is. lv. 12. *The vales* (Heb. *'êmek*) denote "the long broad sweeps sometimes found between parallel ranges of hills" (*Sinai and Pal.*, p. 481) which were the natural cornfields of Palestine (1 Sam. vi. 13). The graphic touch of the Heb., which represents the pastures and vales as shouting *one to another*, can hardly be preserved in translation.

PSALM LXVI.

Another Psalm of thanksgiving, probably intended, like Ps. lxv, for use at the Passover, but evidently owing its origin to special circumstances which called for more than ordinary rejoicings. It consists of two parts, distinguished by the use of the first person plural (1—12) and the first person singular (13—20) respectively; and it contains five stanzas of nearly equal length, marked off (except where the division is obvious at the end of the first part and of the whole) by *Selah*.

i. 1. All the inhabitants of the world are summoned to praise God and acknowledge His sovereignty (1—4).

2. They are bidden to contemplate His mighty works on behalf of His people in the past, and to recognise that His sovereignty is still exercised in the government of the world (5—7).

3. They are invited to praise God for His recent deliverance of His people from a calamity which had threatened to prove their ruin (8—12).

ii. 1. The people's representative enters the Temple to pay the vows which he had made in the hour of distress (13—15).

2. He invites all who fear God to listen to his grateful acknowledgement of God's answer to his prayer, and concludes with an ascription of praise to God for His goodness (16—20).

The reader is at once struck by the abrupt change from the first person plural in *vv.* 1—12 to the first person singular in *vv.* 13—20. How is it to be accounted for, and who is the speaker in *vv.* 13 ff?

(1) Some critics have supposed that portions of two Psalms, the one national, the other personal, have been combined. But would not the incongruity, if it exists, have been felt by the compiler? and the similarity of the situation (*vv.* 9 ff, 14 ff), and of the style (*vv.* 5, 8, 16) in both parts is strongly in favour of the unity of the Psalm.

(2) In spite of the personal turn of the language in *vv.* 13 ff, it might be the congregation assembled for worship which lifts up its voice as one man in that consciousness of national solidarity which was so vivid a reality to the mind of ancient Israel.

(3) But this view does not account for the *transition* from the plural to the singular; and it seems best to hear in these verses the voice of the responsible and representative leader of the nation (not necessarily himself the author of the Psalm), who identifies its fortunes and interests with his own.

Who then was this leader and what was the occasion? The language of *vv.* 9 ff clearly refers to some wonderful interposition by which God had delivered the nation from a danger which threatened its very existence. Was it the termination of the Assyrian tyranny by the destruction of Sennacherib's army? or was it the restoration from the Babylonian captivity? If it was the latter, the Psalm must be placed after B.C. 516, for the Temple is standing, and sacrificial worship is being carried on. But there is no distinct reference to the Exile; the language points to a short and sharp crisis rather than to a prolonged humiliation; and the whole Psalm admits of a far more satisfactory explanation in connexion with the earlier occasion. (*a*) The Assyrian oppression was certainly sufficiently severe, and the danger to Judah sufficiently great, to justify the language of *vv.* 9 ff. It must have seemed as though Jerusalem's last hour was come, and the Southern Kingdom must inevitably share the fate of the Northern Kingdom. (*b*) A distinctive feature of the Psalm is the appeal to the nations to recognise Jehovah as the ruler of the world. In just such a spirit Hezekiah prays for deliverance from Sennacherib "that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD, even thou only" (Is. xxxvii. 20); and in God's name Isaiah bids those who are afar off to hear what He has done and those who are near to acknowledge His might (xxxiii. 13). (*c*) The parallel obviously suggested between the Exodus and the recent deliverance might seem to point to the Return from Babylon which is so often spoken of as a second Exodus: but the parallel between the Egyptian oppression and the Assyrian oppression is

constantly present to Isaiah's mind (x. 24, &c.), and he expressly compares the rejoicings with which the deliverance will be celebrated to the rejoicings of the Passover (xxx. 29). (*d*) The Psalm contains some striking parallels of thought and language with Is. i, and with Pss. xlvi, xlviii, lxxv, lxxvi, which belong to that time.

If then the Psalm is a song for the Passover festival, celebrating the deliverance of Jerusalem from the tyranny of the Assyrians and the menaces of Sennacherib, the speaker in *vv.* 13 ff (though not necessarily the composer of the Psalm) will be Hezekiah. This may explain the personal, and yet more than personal, character of the language. He speaks as the representative and mouthpiece of the nation in its trial and deliverance; and in *vv.* 16 ff not without allusion to his own restoration from sickness, which was to him a type and pledge of the nation's escape from death (Is. xxxviii. 5 ff). His prayer in his sickness (Is. xxxviii. 3) presents a striking parallel to the profession of integrity in *v.* 18.

This Psalm and Ps. lxvii are the only anonymous Psalms which have *For the Chief Musician* prefixed. It is doubly described as *A Song, a Psalm*, or perhaps *A Song for Music*. The LXX adds *ἀναστάσεως, of resurrection*, probably with reference to *vv.* 9, 16.

To the chief Musician, A Song *or* Psalm.

Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: 66
Sing forth the honour of his name: 2
Make his praise glorious.
Say unto God, How terrible *art thou in* thy works! 3
Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies
submit themselves unto thee.

1—4. All the earth is summoned to worship God and acknowledge the greatness of His power.

1. *Make a joyful noise*] Or, as the word is rendered in xlvii. 1, **shout**: greet Him with the acclamations which befit a victorious king.

all ye lands] **Lit. as R.V., all the earth, as in *v.* 4.**

2. *Sing forth the honour of his name*] Or, **Hymn forth the glory of his name**: celebrate in a joyous psalm this fresh revelation of His character.

make his praise glorious] Or, perhaps, *ascribe glory to praise him*.

3. *How terrible* art thou in *thy works!*] Better as R.V., **How terrible are thy works!** Cp. lxv. 5; Rev. xv. 3.

through the greatness of thy power] Rather, of thy strength; cp. xlvi. 1; lxiii. 2; lxviii. 33, 34.

submit themselves unto thee] Or, **come cringing unto thee.** The word, which means literally *to lie* (hence *A.V. be found liars unto thee*) and so *to yield feigned obedience*, denotes the unwilling homage paid by the conquered to their conqueror. Cp. xviii. 44; lxxxi. 15; Deut xxxiii. 29.

4 All the earth shall worship thee,
And shall sing unto thee; they shall sing *to* thy name.
Selah.
5 Come and see the works of God:
He is terrible *in his* doing toward the children of men.
6 He turned the sea into dry *land:*
They went through the flood on foot:
There did we rejoice in him.

4. All the earth shall worship thee and hymn thee,
Yea, hymn thy name.

This verse is part of the address to God put into the mouth of the nations.

5—7. The nations are invited to contemplate God's mighty works for His people in the past, and to learn that the sovereignty to which they bear witness is eternal and universal.

5. *Come and see the works of God*] Cp. xlvi. 8, the only other place where the word for *works* is found.

he is *terrible* in his *doing toward the children of men*] The preposition *toward* implies supremacy *over* mankind. All men must fear Him (lxiv. 9); but it depends on themselves whether they will reverence Him as their God, or must dread Him as an enemy.

6. The passage of the Red Sea and the crossing of the Jordan are referred to as the most notable of His terrible acts (lxv. 5). Cp. lxxiv. 13; lxxviii. 13; &c. *Flood*, as in Josh. xxiv. 2, 3, 14, 15, is an archaism for river (R.V.).

there did we rejoice in him] At the Red Sea and the Jordan. The Psalmist can thus identify himself and his contemporaries with the Israelites of ancient time, for he regards the nation as possessing an unbroken continuity of life. This rendering is grammatically justifiable, and it suits the context better than the alternative of R.V. marg., *there let us rejoice in him*, whether this is understood to mean, "*There*—on the spot where those old historical events occurred,—there let us take our stand, and renew our praise to Him, our wondrous Benefactor" (Kay); or, "*There*, pointing as it were to the field in which God had made bare His arm, and where the past history had been repeated in the present, *there* let us rejoice in Him" (Perowne). For the Psalmist is addressing the nations, not his countrymen, and a historical reference to the rejoicing which took place after the passage of the Red Sea is more natural than an invitation to join in celebrating either that or the recent deliverance. Moreover mention of the recent deliverance appears to be reserved for the next stanza, to which *v.* 7 forms the appropriate transition. Bp. Perowne's explanation would at any rate require the adoption of the LXX reading, 'who turneth the sea into dry land, they go through the river on foot'; i.e. He is ever doing as He did at the Red Sea and the Jordan, opening ways of escape for His people.

He ruleth by his power for ever;
His eyes behold the nations:
Let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.
O bless our God, ye people,
And make the voice of his praise to be heard:
Which holdeth our soul in life,
And suffereth not our feet to be moved.
For thou, O God, hast proved us:
Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.
Thou broughtest us into the net;

7. *by his power*] By his might (R.V.), as lxv. 6.

for ever] What is true for the past is true for the present and the future. God's sovereignty is eternal. Cp. cxlv. 13; Jer. x. 10.

his eyes behold the nations] Better, as R.V. renders the word in Prov. xv. 3, keep watch upon. He is the world's watchman, sleeplessly on the watch lest any foe should injure Israel. Cp. xxxiii. 10, 13 ff; Is. xxvii. 3; and Hezekiah's prayer (Is. xxxvii. 17), "open thine eyes, O LORD, and see."

let not the rebellious exalt themselves] A warning to those who obstinately resist God's will (lxviii. 6, 18) to humble themselves (ii. 10 f), rather than a prayer to God to humble them (ix. 19). Cp. God's reproof of Sennacherib by Isaiah (xxxvii. 23), "Against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high?"

8—12. A renewed call to the nations to praise God for His deliverance of Israel from dangers which menaced the very existence of the nation.

8. *ye people*] Ye peoples (R.V.). The nations, not Israel, are still addressed. Conscious of Israel's mission to the world, the Psalmist can call upon them to give thanks for Israel's preservation to fulfil its work for them.

9. **Who hath set our soul in life,**
And not suffered our foot to be moved.

The nation was on the point of death and ruin, but God preserved and upheld it. The tenses indicate that the words are not the statement of a general truth (as A.V. renders them), but refer particularly to the deliverance from the trial described in the following verses.

10. *proved us...tried us*] Words used of testing precious metals, and smelting away the dross (xvii. 3; xxvi. 2; Prov. xvii. 3; Jer. ix. 7; Zech. xiii. 9; Mal. iii. 2, 3). God had declared His intention of smelting out the dross from His people by the Assyrian troubles (Is. i. 25).

11. *Thou broughtest us into the net*] God had deliberately brought them into the power of their enemies, to punish them for their sins. Cp. for the figure Job xix. 6. Some commentators render *into the dungeon*, a figure for the loss of freedom (Is. xlii. 22), but the usage of the word is not in favour of this rendering.

Thou laidst affliction upon our loins.
12 Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads;
We went through fire and through water:
But thou broughtest us out into a wealthy *place*.

13 I will go *into* thy house with burnt offerings:
I will pay thee my vows,
14 Which my lips have uttered,
And my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble.
15 I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings,
With the incense of rams;

thou laidst &c.] Thou layedst a crushing load upon our loins, bowing us down under its weight.

12. Better: Thou didst cause...we went .but thou hast brought us out. The figure in the first line is clearly that of the vanquished flung down upon the ground, and trampled remorselessly under the horseshoofs or crushed by the chariot wheels of their conquerors. Cp. Is. li. 23. Representations of a conqueror driving his chariot over prostrate foes may be seen on Egyptian and Assyrian monuments. The sense of outrage is heightened by the word for *men*, which means *mortal men*. Cp. ix. 19; x. 18; lvi. 1. *Fire and water* are symbolical of extreme and varied dangers. Cp. Is. xliii. 2.

into a wealthy place] Lit., *into abundance*, the opposite of the privations we endured. But the Ancient Versions point to a different and more suitable reading, a place of liberty. Cp. xviii. 19; cxix. 45.

13—15. The people's leader and representative enters the Temple to pay the vows which he made in the hour of national distress.

13. *I will go*] R.V. I will come, the usual word for approaching God in the sanctuary (v. 7; xlii. 2; xliii. 4; lxv. 2; &c.). The transition from the plural in *vv.* 1—12 ('we,' 'us,' 'our') to the singular is more naturally explained by supposing that the king comes forward to speak as the representative of the people than by supposing that the congregation speaks as an individual. He comes with 'burnt offerings,' expressing the devotion of the worshipper to God, and 'peace offerings' in fulfilment of his vows (lxv. 1; cp. Lev. xxii. 21).

14. Wherewith my lips opened,
And which my mouth spake, when I was in distress.

For the first line cp. Judg. xi. 35 f; but there is no reason to suppose that rash vows are here meant.

15. Burnt offerings of fatlings will I offer unto thee,
Together with incense of rams.

'Incense of rams' denotes the sweet savour of the sacrifice ascending as it was consumed by fire. Cp. perhaps, though the meaning is not certain, Is. i. 13. The cognate verb is used of burning the victim or the fat of the victim on the altar. Thus Ex. xxix. 18, "and thou shalt

I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah.
Come *and* hear, all ye that fear God, 16
And I will declare what he hath done for my soul.
I cried unto him *with* my mouth, 17
And *he was* extolled with my tongue.
If I regard iniquity in my heart, 18
The Lord will not hear *me:*
But verily God hath heard *me;* 19
He hath attended to the voice of my prayer.

burn (lit., if an obsolete verb might be revived, *incense*) the whole ram upon the altar; it is a burnt offering unto the LORD: it is a sweet savour." According to the Levitical ritual the ram was to be offered as a burnt offering or peace offering only by the whole people or its princes, by the high-priest or an ordinary priest, or by a Nazirite; never by an ordinary individual (by whom however it was to be used as a trespass offering). *He-goats* are only mentioned in connexion with the offerings of the princes (Num. vii. 17 ff). Hence it may be inferred that the Psalm refers to sacrifices offered by the nation or its leaders, not by an ordinary private individual. Cp. however Is. i. 11, where almost exactly the same animals are mentioned as here; and Ps. l. 9, 13.

I will offer] Lit., *dress* for sacrifice. Cp. 1 Kings xviii. 23 ff; Ex. xxix. 36 ff; &c.: and Gr. ἑρδειν, ῥέζειν, in LXX ποιεῖν: Lat. *facere*.

16—20. All who fear God are bidden to hear what He has done for the speaker. He had prayed in expectation of a favourable hearing, knowing that sincerity is the necessary condition of prayer; and the answer to his prayer had attested his sincerity. In conclusion he blesses God for this continuance of His lovingkindness.

16. *all ye that fear God*] The whole drift of the Ps., especially *vv.* 1, 5, 8, is in favour of extending the phrase to include all who fear God wherever they are to be found, whether Israelites, or non-Israelites who have been won to worship Him by the sight of His works, rather than of limiting it to Israel, or an inner circle of the faithful in Israel.

what he hath done for my soul] What he did for me when my very life was in danger. If Hezekiah is the speaker, he may be thinking at once of his own life (Is. xxxviii. 17) and of the life of the nation whose representative he was. He had prayed for both (Is. xxxvii. 15 ff; xxxviii. 2); and the preservation of the one was a pledge of the preservation of the other (Is. xxxviii. 6).

17. *and* he was *extolled with my tongue*] Better as R.V. marg., and high praise (cxlix. 6) was under my tongue. Even while he prayed, he had praises ready, so sure was he of an answer. Cp. x. 7, though (see note) the idea there may be different.

18, 19. **If I had regarded iniquity in my heart,**
The Lord would not hear:
But verily God hath heard.

20 Blessed *be* God, which hath not turned away my prayer,
Nor his mercy from me.

Hypocrisy disqualifies the suppliant but he is confident that he is no hypocrite, and the answer to his prayer justifies him. There is no self-righteousness in this, but the simplicity of "a conscience void of offence toward God and men." Cp. Hezekiah's plea, Is. xxxviii. 3; and Ps. xvii. 1 ff; xviii. 20 ff; Job xvi. 17; Is. i. 15; lix. 2, 3: 1 John iii. 21; &c.; and Is. i. 13 (R.V.), "I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting"; i.e. tolerate the union of religious observances and iniquitous conduct.

20. *Blessed be God*] Cp. xxviii. 6; xxxi. 21; lxviii. 19, 35.

nor his mercy from me] *From me* must belong to this clause only. It is forced to explain 'who has not removed my prayer and His loving-kindness from me' to mean 'who has not deprived me of the power to pray or of the blessing of an answer'; in spite of the beauty of St Augustine's comment: "Cum videris non a te amotam deprecationem tuam, securus esto, quia non est a te amota misericordia eius." Possibly a verb, such as Coverdale (P.B.V.) supplies for the sake of the rhythm, has been lost; so that the clause would read, nor withdrawn his loving-kindness from me.

PSALM LXVII.

Another bright and joyous song, evidently intended for use in the Temple worship, perhaps, like the two last, at the Passover, but more probably, as the harvest seems to have been gathered in (*v.* 6), at the Feast of Pentecost (Harvest), or Feast of Tabernacles (Ingathering).

It consists of three stanzas of four, five, and six lines respectively. The second and third have an initial refrain.

i. In words borrowed from the ancient priestly benediction the assembled people pray for God's blessing, that all the world may learn the character of His providential dealings with men (1, 2).

ii. O that all nations might join in worshipping God, and rejoice in the establishment of His kingdom upon earth (3, 4)!

iii. Yea surely, they will join in His worship. He has granted Israel an abundant harvest; He does bless them and will continue to bless them, and so all nations will be won to acknowledge Him as their God (5, 7).

The Psalm may be connected in origin as well as in purpose with the two preceding Psalms. Like them it is not merely a thanksgiving for a plentiful harvest, but is evidently inspired by the recollection of some great deliverance calculated to make a deep impression upon the nations, which might be regarded as the pledge if not the commencement of the visible divine rule of righteousness upon the earth. Now the destruction of Sennacherib's army, with which we have seen reason to connect the two last Psalms, was just such an event: and we know that the prophets of the time expected the establishment of the Messianic kingdom to

follow immediately upon the removal of the Assyrian tyranny. See e.g. Is. x. 33—xi. 9; Mic. v. 2 ff.

As in Ps. lxvi God's providential care for Israel in some great national crisis, so here His goodness towards His people exemplified in the recent bountiful harvest, is urged as an argument to win the nations to His service. Disaster and defeat, drought and scarcity, put Israel to shame before the nations (Joel ii. 17, 19); deliverance from danger and domestic prosperity were an evidence to the nations of the true character of Israel's God. The Psalm is inspired by the consciousness of Israel's mission to the world as the 'Messianic nation,' the instrument for the establishment of God's universal kingdom: it is a prayer for the accomplishment of that mission.

The O.T. prayer for the extension of God's salvation to all the nations is very appropriately appointed for use as an alternative Canticle to the Nunc Dimittis,—the thanksgiving for the Saviour through Whom that hope is to be realised. It is moreover commonly used at Afternoon Service in the ritual of the Sephardic Jews.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm *or* Song.

God be merciful unto us, and bless us; 67
And cause his face to shine upon us; Selah.
That thy way may be known upon earth, 2

The title may be rendered, **For the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments. A Psalm, a Song.** See *Introd.* pp. xxiv, xix.

1, 2. The final object of the blessing for which Israel prays is that the whole world may know God.

1. The Psalm begins with words taken from the priestly blessing of Num. vi. 24 ff:

"Jehovah bless thee and keep thee:
Jehovah cause his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee:
Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace:"

as the following Ps. begins with the invocation used when the Ark started on a journey, Num. x. 35. Other echoes of the priestly blessing may be found in iv. 6; xxix. 11; xxxi. 16; lxxx. 3, 7, 19.

God be merciful] Rather, as in Num. vi. 25, **be gracious unto us.** *God* is substituted for the original *Jehovah* according to the usual practice of the editor of the 'Elohistic' collection of Psalms.

upon us] Lit. **with us.** For the simple preposition of the original (*unto* or *upon*) the Psalmist substitutes one which suggests the thought of God's gracious favour *abiding with* His people. Cp. "The blessing of God Almighty...be amongst you and remain with you always."

Selah (if it is in its right place) marks a musical interlude following upon and emphasising this echo of the priestly benediction. But it may have been accidentally transferred from the close of *v.* 2.

2. Lit. *that men may know thy way in the earth.* The blessings

Thy saving health among all nations.
3 Let the people praise thee, O God;
Let all the people praise thee.
4 O let the nations be glad and sing for joy:
For thou shalt judge the people righteously,
And govern the nations upon earth. Selah.
5 Let the people praise thee, O God;
Let all the people praise thee.
6 *Then* shall the earth yield her increase;
And God, *even* our own God, shall bless us.

which God bestows upon Israel will shew the nations what a God He is, and make them desire to serve Him. Cp. Jer. xxxiii. 9; Zech. viii. 20 ff; Is. xi. 9. God's *way* is His gracious method of dealing with men, explained in the next line as His *saving health*, i.e. *salvation*, as the word is generally translated. *Health* in old English meant healing power, deliverance, salvation. Cp. xlii. 11.

3, 4. May all nations soon acknowledge the God of Israel as their God!

3. Let the peoples give thanks unto thee, O God;
Let all the peoples give thanks unto thee.

The A.V. *people* is misleading. It is not Israel that is meant, but all the peoples of the earth. Cp. cxvii. 1 f.

4. The reason for the universal rejoicing of the nations is given in the words, **for thou shalt judge the peoples with equity**; i.e. rule them with just and equitable government. Cp. the attributes of the true king as God's representative, Is. xi. 3 f; Ps. lxxii. 12 ff. *Judge* does not here mean *punish*, but *govern*.

govern] Or, lead, a word often applied to God's leading of Israel through the wilderness (lxxviii. 14). All nations are under His providential guidance, not Israel only, His specially chosen flock. Cp. Am. ix. 7.

5—7. The special occasion of the Psalm in the present bountiful harvest.

5. *the people*] As before, **the peoples**. This refrain is generally treated as before as a wish or prayer; but it is worth considering whether the tone of the last stanza does not change throughout from prayer to confident hope, so that we should render, *The peoples shall give thanks unto thee, O God*. The form of a refrain is often slightly varied, why not its *tone*? The ambiguity arises from the fact that Heb. (with some exceptions) does not possess separate forms for the future and the optative.

6. Then *shall the earth* &c.] Render, **The land hath yielded her increase**, according to the promise of Lev. xxvi. 4; cp. Ps. lxxxv. 12; lxv. 9 ff. *God, our God*, is the Elohistic editor's substitution for *Jehovah our God*.

God shall bless us;
And all the ends of the earth shall fear him. 7

shall bless us] Here and in the following verse the verbs might be taken as a prayer: *may God bless us*. But it is better to render *doth* or *shall bless us*. Pointing to the abundant harvest (*v.* 6 *a*), the thankful people declare that God is blessing them, and express their faith that He will continue to bless them, with the result that the remotest nations of the world will become 'fearers of God,' worshippers of the only true God, the God of Israel (lxvi. 16).

PSALM LXVIII.

The theme of this magnificent Psalm is the march of God to victory. It traces the establishment of His kingdom in Israel in the past; it looks forward to the defeat of all opposition in the future, until all the kingdoms of the world own the God of Israel as their Lord and pay Him homage.

Every conceivable occasion and date have been suggested for this Psalm, from the age of Joshua to that of the Maccabees. Those who accept the title, and maintain the Davidic authorship, or at any rate the Davidic date, are by no means agreed as to the particular period of David's reign to which it should be referred. Some suppose it to have been written for the translation of the ark to Zion (2 Sam. vi): others, for the triumphal procession of thanksgiving for some victory; while others again regard it as celebrating David's victories in general, with retrospective allusion to the translation of the Ark, and prospective anticipation of the building of the Temple. Others have connected it with the translation of the Ark to Solomon's Temple. Others find an appropriate occasion for it in the victory of Jehoshaphat and Jehoram over Moab, or in the repulse of the Assyrians in the reign of Hezekiah. Others place it in the closing years of the Babylonian Exile, and others after the Return from Babylon, at a date decidedly later than the time of Nehemiah. Others think that it was written during the wars between Egypt and Syria for the possession of Palestine towards the close of the third century B.C.; and others place it later still, connecting it with the war between Ptolemy Philometor and Alexander Balas, B.C. 146 (1 Macc. xi).

The obvious inference from this wide variety of opinion is that the data are really insufficient for forming a definite conclusion. It is impossible to speak positively; but the grounds for assigning it to the same period as Is. xl—lxvi, i.e. the last decade of the Babylonian exile, seem so far to preponderate, and the circumstances of that time appear so far to give the best background for the explanation of the Psalm as a whole, that this view has been provisionally adopted as the basis of the present commentary. The following are the chief grounds for it.

(1) *Language* is no doubt a precarious criterion; but there are features in the Psalm which point to a late rather than an early date. Thus e.g. the word for *prosperity* (*v.* 6) is derived from a root found only

in late books (Esth. Eccl.), though common in Aramaic: the nearest parallel to the word for *parched land* (*v.* 6) is in Ezekiel; the word for *scatter* (*v.* 30) is not the ordinary Heb. word, but half Aramaic in form.

(2) *The literary affinities* of the Psalm point decidedly in the same direction. Not only is it dependent on the Blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxiii)[1] and the Song of Deborah (Judg. v)[2], but it contains parallels with Is. xl—lxvi which seem to indicate either that the writer was acquainted with these prophecies, or else that his language had been formed in the same atmosphere of thought and hope. Thus e.g. the summons of *v.* 4, "Cast up a highway for him that rideth through the deserts" at once reminds us of Is. xl. 3, "Make straight in the desert a highway for our God"; and the very same word "cast up a highway" is used in Is. lvii. 14; lxii. 10, and nowhere else in this sense. With *v.* 6 compare Is. xlii. 7; xlix. 9; lxi. 1; and with *v.* 31 cp. Is. xlv. 14. There are also parallels with the Prayer of Habakkuk[3], but they are not in themselves such as to prove that the Psalmist was indebted to it.

On the other hand the dependence of the Psalm on Is. xxiv—xxvii (probably to be dated after the Return from Babylon, perhaps about B.C. 500—480), which is maintained by some commentators, certainly cannot be proved.

(3) Clear and definite *historical references* are wanting; but many of the allusions can best be explained from the circumstances of the closing years of the Exile.

(1) The opening verses in each of the main divisions of the Psalm (1—3; 19—23) seem to contemplate an approaching manifestation of God's power on behalf of His people which will bring salvation and joy to them, shame and destruction to their enemies, and appear to point (cp. *vv.* 5, 6, 20) to the present need of such an interposition. The same juxtaposition of Redemption and Judgement is prominent in Is. xl—lxvi.

(2) The characteristic attributes of God in *vv.* 4—6 no doubt include a reference to the Exodus from Egypt and the settlement in Canaan; but the parallels already quoted from Is. xl ff give good ground for thinking that the Exodus from Babylon and the resettlement of Israel in Canaan were also in the Psalmist's mind.

(3) *Vv.* 7—18 are a historical retrospect; and there is nothing to shew that the poet was contemporary with the point to which he carries it. If he wrote in view of the approaching return of God to His ancient dwelling-place, His original entry into it was a natural point to which to bring down his survey.

(4) It has been maintained that *vv.* 24—27 are the description of an actual procession which the Psalmist himself has witnessed, and that the mention of Zebulun and Naphtali along with Judah and Benjamin carries the Psalm back to a date before the separation of the kingdoms.

[1] Cp. *v.* 17 with Deut. xxxiii. 2; *vv.* 19, 20 with Deut. xxxiii. 29; *v.* 26 with Deut. xxxiii. 28; *vv.* 4, 33, 34 with Deut. xxxiii. 26, 27.

[2] Cp. *v.* 4 with Judg. v. 3; *vv.* 7, 8 with Judg. v. 4, 5; *v.* 12 with Judg. v. 30; *v.* 13 with Judg. v. 16; *v.* 18 with Judg. v. 12; *v.* 27 with Judg. v. 14, 18.

[3] Cp. *v.* 7 with Hab. iii. 12, 13; *v.* 10 with Hab. iii. 14; *v.* 21 with Hab. iii. 13, 14.

But, as will be shewn in the notes, the connexion of thought points rather to an occasion beyond the deliverance spoken of in *vv.* 19—23 as still future; in other words to an ideal procession which rises before the poet's imagination as the celebration of the great triumph over Israel's enemies to which he looks forward; and if this is the case, the mention of Northern as well as Southern tribes as taking part in it can be best explained as the anticipation of the fulfilment of the numerous prophecies which predict the reunion of Israel and Judah.

(5) *V.* 29 does not necessarily presuppose the existence of the Temple. It may look forward to its restoration, just as, on the hypothesis of the Davidic date, it must look forward to its erection. The importance of the Temple to the age of the Restoration is a prominent thought in Haggai and Zechariah; and its significance in relation to the nations appears from Is. lx, &c.

(6) The reference to Egypt in *v.* 30 is too obscure to be made the ground of argument. There probably, as in *v.* 31, Egypt is mentioned as the typical enemy of Israel. At any rate it gives no support to the Davidic date. There is no hint that Israel was in any way threatened by Egypt during the reign of David.

It has been argued that the triumphant tone of the Psalm furnishes a conclusive refutation of the hypothesis that it was composed during the Exile. But if the approaching Return was the occasion of some of the grandest prophecies in the O.T., it cannot be impossible that it should also have been the occasion of one of the grandest Psalms in the Psalter. In appearance and to the outward eye the Return from Babylon was a "day of small things": in reality and to the eye of faith it was one of the most momentous crises in the history of the Chosen People, nay, of the world, comparable only to the Exodus. For if the Exodus from Egypt was the birthday of the nation of Israel, the Exodus from Babylon was the birthday of the Jewish Church. The parallel between the first and the second Exodus is constantly present to the mind of the prophets. This poet-seer looks away from the actual circumstances which surround him to the true meaning and the ultimate issues of that new march of God through the deserts which he is about to witness, and he sees the analogy and the guarantee for it in the past history of the nation. There are parts of Is. xl—lxvi (*e.g.* ch. lx) which betray no trace of weakness or misgiving. Why may not the age which could produce such a prophecy have produced such a Psalm? At least the occasion was worthy of a Psalm which has been well described as "the most buoyant, the most powerful, the most animated, which is to be found in the Psalter."

Whatever may have been its origin and date, the grandeur of the Psalm remains the same, and its inspired and inspiring assurance of the certainty of the final triumph of God and the universal recognition of His sovereignty is unaltered. It has always been the favourite Psalm of those who felt (whether rightly or wrongly) that their cause was the cause of God, and that in His strength they were sure to conquer. To the crusaders setting out for the recovery of the Holy Land; to Savonarola and his monks as they marched to the 'trial of fire' in the Piazza at Florence; to the Huguenots who called it "the song of

battles"; to Cromwell at Dunbar as the sun rose on the mists of the morning and he charged Leslie's army; it has supplied words for the expression of their heartfelt convictions.

The choice of the Psalm for use in the service of the Synagogue at Pentecost was doubtless determined by the allusion in *vv.* 7, 8[1] to the giving of the Law at Sinai, which is commemorated at that Festival. Its selection as a Proper Psalm for Whitsunday was probably suggested partly by the Jewish usage, partly by St Paul's application of *v.* 18 to the spiritual gifts bestowed by the risen and ascended Christ upon the Church. But the appropriateness does not depend upon a single verse. No Psalm could be utter for the "birthday of the universal Church" than the Psalm which celebrates the triumphs of God in the history of His people, and looks forward to the extension of His kingdom throughout the world.

It is most truly a Messianic Psalm; for though it contains no direct prophecy of Christ's coming, it is full of the thought of the presence and dwelling of God among His people, which is most fully realised in the Incarnation; and it is animated by the consciousness that all God's mighty works for Israel were but the means to a higher end, the spiritual conquest of the world, and the universal establishment of His kingdom.

The following is an outline of the contents of the Psalm, which consists of a prelude, and two main divisions, which may be subdivided into stanzas of 3, 4, and 5 verses.

i. The Prelude (1—6).

1. God is about to manifest His presence and power to the discomfiture of His foes and the joy of His people (1—3).
2. The Psalmist calls upon his countrymen to welcome the advent of their God and prepare the way for it; bidding them remember what He is—the helper of the helpless and oppressed, the liberator of the captive (4—6).

ii. A survey of Israel's history in proof of God's victorious power and gracious love (7—18).

1. The Exodus from Egypt and the Entry into the Promised Land. His majesty was manifested at Sinai, His goodness in the preparation of Canaan to be the home of the long-oppressed Israelites (7—10).
2. The conquest. He gave them victory over the mighty kings of Canaan (11—14).
3. The choice of Zion. He chose Zion for His earthly abode, and returned to heaven as a triumphant conqueror, having received the submission and homage of men (15—18).

iii. From the past the Psalmist turns to the present and the future (19—35).

1. God is an ever-present Saviour of His people: He will take vengeance on their enemies (19—23).

[1] The Targum introduces references to the giving of the Law in several other passages: *e. g. v.* 11, "The Lord gave the words of the Law to the people": *v.* 15, "Mount Sinai was chosen for the giving of the Law": *v.* 18, see note.

2. Once more the victory of God will be celebrated by a reunited Israel (24—27).

3. The Psalmist prays that God will display His power and subdue all opposition, and sees the nations hastening to pay Him homage (28—31).

4. All nations are summoned to join in the praise of Israel's God, and the Psalm closes with their confession of His gracious sovereignty (32—35).

To the chief Musician, A Psalm *or* Song of David

Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: 68
Let them also that hate him flee before him.
As smoke is driven away, *so* drive *them* away: 2
As wax melteth before the fire,
So let the wicked perish at the presence of God.
But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: 3

1—3. The advent of God brings terror and destruction to His enemies, blessing and joy to His people.

1. **God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered,**
And they that hate him shall flee from his presence.

Ps. lxvii begins with an echo of the priestly blessing of Num. vi. 24 ff, and the opening words of Ps. lxviii are based upon the prayer or watch-word used when the Ark, the symbol of the Divine Presence in the midst of Israel, set forward on its journeys in the wilderness (Num. x. 35). But the Psalmist translates the prayer of Moses

"Arise, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered,
And let them that hate thee flee from thy presence,"

into a positive expression of confident assurance that God is about to arise and manifest His power on behalf of His people. Most versions ancient and modern (except the Genevan, which has the future throughout *vv.* 1—3) render *Let God arise*; but the form of the verb is against this rendering, and if the words had been meant as a prayer, it would have been more natural to retain the direct invocation of the original.

before him] Better, **from his presence** (lit. *face*) as in *vv.* 2, 8; and so also in *vv.* 3, 4.

2. The verbs should be rendered as in *v.* 1 by futures: **As smoke ...so shalt thou drive them away: as wax...so shall the wicked perish at the presence of God.** The smoke scattered by the wind is an apt emblem for total disappearance (xxxvii. 20; Hos. xiii. 3); the wax melted by the fire for unresisting impotence (xcvii. 5; Mic. i. 4). "At the blast of the breath of Jehovah" the wicked vanish, leaving no trace behind; the consuming fire of His wrath they are powerless to withstand.

3. **But the righteous shall be glad, shall exult at the presence of God;**
Yea, they shall rejoice with gladness.

Yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.
4 Sing unto God, sing *praises to* his name:
Extol him that rideth upon the heavens
By his name JAH, and rejoice before him.

The righteous are the people of God, viewed in the light of their calling: *the wicked* are the heathen, regarded in the light of their general antagonism to God and His people. Cp. Hab. i. 13. In the contrast between Israel and the heathen the unrighteousness of many in Israel fades out of sight. The A.V. rendering *before* in this verse and *v.* 4 fails to bring out the significant contrast with *vv.* 1, 2. The Presence which brings dismay and destruction to the wicked, brings joy and blessing to the righteous. Cp. lxvii. 1; Ex. xxxiii. 14; Is. lxiii. 9; 2 Thess. i. 9, 10.

4—6. God's people are summoned to welcome Him and prepare the way for His coming: He is the champion of the weak and defenceless, the liberator of the captive.

4. to *his name*] Praising Him for all that He has revealed Himself to be. Cp. xliv. 8; Ex. iii. 15.

extol &c.] Render,

Cast up a high way for him that rideth through the deserts;
His name is JAH; and exult ye at his presence.

God's advent is described under the figure of the progress of an Oriental monarch, for whose chariot pioneers prepare the road. In almost identical words the prophet calls to the exiles in Babylon (Is. xl. 3),

"Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of the LORD,
Make straight in the desert a high way for our God:"

and in Is. lvii. 14, lxii. 10 the same word *cast up a high way* is used of preparing for the return of Israel from Babylon. God's people must prepare a way for Him by the removal of the obstacles of unbelief and faintheartedness and ungodliness which hinder Him from coming to deliver them.

The renderings of A.V. *Extol...upon the heavens* are derived from Jewish sources. The Targ. renders "Extol him that sitteth upon the throne of his glory in *Araboth*," which is explained by comparison of *v.* 33 to mean the seventh or uppermost heaven. See Talm. *Chagigah* 12 *b* (Streane's transl. p. 65). The curious addition *as it were upon an horse* in P.B.V. (Great Bible, but not Coverdale) appears to come from Münster's Latin Version (1534—5) *veluti equo insidet.*

JAH is a shortened form of *Jehovah* (Jahveh), chosen here perhaps with allusion to its use in Ex. xv. 2 (upon which are based Is. xii. 2, Ps. cxviii. 4), to recall the memories of the Exodus. It is peculiar to poetry, and outside the book of Psalms, where it occurs most frequently in the familiar *Hallelujah* = 'Praise ye Jah,' it is found only in Ex. xv. 2, xvii. 16; Is. xii. 2, xxvi. 4, xxxviii. 11.

A curious mistake is to be found in the older editions of the Prayer

A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, 5
Is God in his holy habitation.
God setteth the solitary in families: 6
He bringeth out those which are bound with chains:
But the rebellious dwell *in* a dry *land.*

Book, until about 1750:—"Praise him in his name: yea, and rejoice before him." The Great Bible of 1539 has, "Prayse ye him in his name Ia and reioyse before hym"; but the edition of Nov. 1540 and others have: "Prayse hym in hys name: yea, and reioyce before hym." It appears to be simply a typographical error.

5. The orphan and the widow are typical examples of the friendless and unprotected who are under God's special guardianship (Ps. x. 14; cxlvi. 9; Hos. xiv. 3). They are the subjects of a special clause in the earliest legislation (Ex. xxii. 22 ff.), which is reechoed by the latest of the prophets (Mal. iii. 5). Cp. Is. i. 17, 23.

his holy habitation] Not the temple but heaven, whence He 'looks down' to bless His people (Deut. xxvi. 15), and rules the world, espousing the cause of the humblest, whom men are most prone to despise. For the phrase cp. Jer. xxv. 30; Zech. ii. 13; 2 Chr. xxx. 27. In Is. lxiii. 15 a different Heb. word is used.

6. God maketh the solitary to dwell in a house;
He bringeth out prisoners into prosperity;
But the stubborn dwell in a parched land.

The verse describes general principles of God's dealings with men, yet with special allusion to the establishment of Israel in Canaan, to their liberation from the bondage of Egypt, and to the fate of the rebels in the wilderness: and again, if the Ps. is rightly placed in the Exile, to the second Exodus from Babylon, and the reestablishment of the Israelites in their ancient home, while the faithless and rebellious part of the people will be left in the dreary and inhospitable heathen land, unwatered by the streams of divine grace (lxiii. 1). *Rebellious* or *stubborn* has been understood by some to refer to the heathen, but the usage of the word (which is applied to the '*stubborn* and rebellious son' in Deut. xxi. 18, 20) suggests rather that refractory Israelites are meant, as in lxxviii. 8. Stubborn rebellion against Jehovah's will was characteristic of the whole course of Israel's history; and it is hinted not obscurely that as of old the rebels perished in the wilderness instead of entering Canaan, so now the murmurers in Babylon, of whom it is plain from Is. xl—lxvi (e.g. lxv. 2) that there were many, will be left there to their fate. The *solitary* or *desolate* (xxv. 16) are the homeless and friendless. Cp. Is. lviii. 7; and (though the word is different) Lam. i. 1.

7—18. After this general introduction the Psalmist proceeds to review the past history of Israel in proof of God's victorious power and of His gracious love towards His people.

7 O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people,
When thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah.
8 The earth shook, the heavens also dropped
At the presence of God: *even* Sinai itself *was moved*
At the presence of God, the God of Israel.
9 Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain,

7—10. The Exodus from Egypt and the Entry into Canaan.

7, 8. These verses are borrowed, with some omissions and alterations, from the Song of Deborah (Judg. v. 4, 5):

"Jehovah, when thou wentest forth out of Seir,
When thou didst march out of the field of Edom,
The earth trembled, the heavens also dropped,
Yea, the clouds dropped water;
The mountains quaked at the presence of God,
Even yon Sinai at the presence of Jehovah, the God of Israel."

When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He "went before them... to lead them in the way" (Ex. xiii. 21 f.; cp. Mic. ii. 13), and in the great Theophany of Sinai the mystery and marvel of His self-revelation were concentrated. Earthquake and storm are the symbols of His Presence and Power. See Ex. xix. 16 ff., and cp. Ps. xviii. 7 ff.; Hab. iii. 3 ff.

Three times in this Psalm (7, 19, 32) *Selah* occurs not at the close of a stanza, but after the first verse of a stanza. If the text is right, it would seem that a musical interlude was employed to enforce the thought with which the stanza begins.

8. *shook*] R.V. **trembled.**

dropped] Torrents of rain accompanied the thunders and lightnings. Cp. lxxvii. 17 f.

at the presence of God] Cp. *vv.* 1, 2, 3, 4.

even *Sinai itself* was moved] R.V., **Even yon Sinai (trembled).** The words *yon Sinai* come in somewhat abruptly here, while in Judges they follow quite naturally upon the clause "the mountains quaked." A verb however can be supplied from the first line, and there is no need to alter the text.

the God of Israel] The use of this title here is significant. It was from Sinai that the covenant-relation between Jehovah and His people dated. Cp. Ex. xxiv. 8, 10.

9. *Thou, O God, didst send* &c.] Or, **dost send,** a general truth, illustrated by God's dealings with Israel. The verse is explained by many to refer to the manna and the quails which God 'rained down' upon the Israelites (Ex. xvi. 4; Ps. lxxviii. 24, 27); or generally, to all the gifts and blessings which He bestowed upon them in the wilderness. But 'dwelt' in *v.* 10 (though the word is sometimes used of the temporary sojourn in the wilderness, e.g. Num. xxv. 1; Deut. i. 46) is most naturally understood of the settlement in Canaan, and the antecedent to 'therein' must be 'thine inheritance,' i.e. the promised land, which is called God's inheritance in Ex. xv. 17; Jer. ii. 7; Ps. lxxix. 1; 2 Macc. ii. 4, "The mount which Moses ascended and viewed the inheritance of

Whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance when it was
weary.
Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: 10
Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.

The Lord gave the word: 11
Great *was* the company of those that published *it*.
Kings of armies did flee apace: 12

God." *V.* 9 will thus refer to the gracious preparation of the land of Canaan to be the home of Israel. In contrast to the land of Egypt from which they had come, and the wilderness through which they had passed, it was a land of abundant rain (Deut. xi. 10—12; Ps. lxv. 9): though it too had known what it was to be 'weary' with drought (Gen. xlvii. 13). But *a plentiful rain*, lit. *rain of bounteousnesses*, is not perhaps to be limited to the literal meaning, but may include all blessings which God pours out upon His people of His gracious liberality.

whereby thou didst confirm] Omit *whereby*, which is not in the Heb. *Confirm* may mean *stablish* as in Ex. xv. 17; Ps. xlviii. 8; or *prepare*, LXX κατηρτίσω.

weary] Cp., though the word is different, lxiii. 1.

10. Thy congregation took up its abode therein:
In thy goodness, O God, thou dost provide for the afflicted.

The word rendered *congregation*, or, as R.V. marg., *troop*, or *family*, is a peculiar one. The corresponding Arabic word means "such a kindred group as was guided in war and on the march by one chief, migrating together, and forming generally a single settlement." Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, pp. 36 ff. From the meaning *life* or *living*, the word came to mean a *clan*, a group of one blood, on the old Semitic principle that "the life of the flesh lies in the blood" (Lev. xvii. 11). *Thou dost provide for the afflicted* is a general truth, which found special illustration in regard to Israel, 'afflicted' by the bondage of Egypt (Ex. iii. 7, 17).

11—14. With a few graphic strokes the poet recalls the victories by which Canaan was won and retained. He refers to the times of the Judges as well as to the original conquest under Joshua.

11. The Lord giveth the word:
The women that publish the tidings are a great host.

God's word is sovereign (xxxiii. 9; Is. xxx. 30). He has only to command, and the victory is won. Forthwith are heard the songs of the women proclaiming the good news. Victories were commonly celebrated by the Israelite women with song and dance. Cp. *v.* 25, Ex. xv. 20 f.; Judg. v; xi. 34; 1 Sam. xviii. 6 f. It is a less satisfactory explanation to regard *the word* as the song of triumph which God puts in the mouth of the singers.

And she that tarried at home divided the spoil.
13 Though ye have lien among the pots,
Yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver,

12. Kings of hosts do flee, do flee,
And she that tarrieth at home divideth the spoil.

Vv. 12—14 contain allusions to the Song of Deborah and possibly to similar poems which have not been preserved to us. Many commentators regard them as the triumphal song of the women celebrating the victory; but it is better to take them as the continuation of the poet's description of the victory. The verses run in pairs, and *v.* 13 is parallel to *v.* 12. The first line paints the scene in the battle-field—the pell-mell rout of the defeated kings: the second line depicts the scene at home when the warriors have returned with their spoils.

The unusual expression *kings of hosts* seems to be chosen with reference to the title *Jehovah of hosts*. Vast as their armies may be, they are powerless to resist One who has infinitely stronger armies at His command. The graphic repetition *do flee, do flee* recalls the form of Judg. v. 22; and the next line recalls the words of Judg. v. 30. The battle has been won; the warriors return home with their spoils; and the matron who has anxiously awaited the issue of the battle divides among her family the rich garments and ornaments taken from the enemy. Cp. Judg. viii. 26; 2 Sam. i. 24; 2 Kings vii. 8, 15.

13. An extremely difficult verse. It has been suggested that the second and third lines, like the first, are derived from some ancient poem now lost, and that to readers who could recognise the allusion they would be intelligible, though to us they are obscure. The A.V., which appears to contrast the squalid misery of Israel in Egypt with the brilliant prosperity of their new home in Canaan, must be abandoned, and two considerations must govern the interpretation of the verse.

(1) The first line clearly alludes to Judg. v. 16 (cp. Gen. xlix. 14, R.V.), where Deborah upbraids Reuben for cowardice and irresolution, and for preferring the ignoble ease of pastoral life to the glorious dangers of the war of independence:

> "Why satest thou among the sheepfolds,
> To hear the pipings for the flocks?"

Lie is here substituted for *sit* to emphasise the idea of slothful inactivity.

(2) The second and third lines describe under the image of a dove basking in the sunshine an idyllic condition of peace and prosperity. The idea that the dove represents the enemy fleeing in all his gorgeous splendour, depicted thus as an inducement to Israel to pursue and win rich spoil, may safely be set aside. The point of comparison is the beauty of the dove's plumage, not the swiftness of its flight.

Three explanations deserve to be taken account of.

(1) **Will ye lie among the sheepfolds,**
(As) the wings of a dove covered with silver,
And her pinions with yellow gold? (R.V.).

And her feathers with yellow gold.
When the Almighty scattered kings in it,
It was *white as* snow in Salmon.

The whole verse, like Judg. v. 16, will then be a reproof of the recreant Israelites who preferred the ignoble ease of their pastoral life to the hardships and dangers of the battlefield. But such a reproof is hardly in place here, nor does this explanation give its full natural meaning to the simile.

(2) More probable is the rendering of R.V. marg.:

When ye lie among the sheepfolds,
(It is as) the wings of a dove...gold.

which regards the verse as a description of the peace and prosperity which await Israel after the victories described in *v.* 12. "Everything will gleam and glitter with silver and gold. Israel is God's turtle-dove (lxxiv. 19), and accordingly the new prosperity is compared to the play of colour on the wings of a dove basking in the sunshine." (Delitzsch). This interpretation however fails to take account of the allusion in line 1 to Judg. v. 16.

(3) It seems preferable to render thus:

Though ye may lie among the sheepfolds,
The dove's wings are covered with silver,
And her pinions with yellow gold.

Though some Israelites may fail in their duty and prefer slothful ease to fighting the battles of Jehovah, yet Israel once more enjoys the blessings of peace and prosperity. In spite of man's backwardness God gives blessing. This explanation takes account of the allusion to Judges, and gives its proper meaning to the simile. It agrees better with the general purport of the Ps., which dwells upon God's victories on behalf of His people. It may moreover (if the Psalm dates from the closing years of the Exile) be intended to convey a tacit reproof to those Israelites who were in danger of preferring selfish ease in Babylon to the patriotic effort of the Return. It warns them that God's purpose for His people would be accomplished, even if they held back from taking part in it.

14. Of this verse, as of *v.* 13, the meaning is uncertain. Possibly it too is a fragment, significant to those who remembered its original context, but necessarily obscure to us. It is doubtful, too, if the text is sound. *In it*, R.V. *therein*, must mean 'in the land.'

Salmon, R.V. *Zalmon*, is only known to us as the name of a wooded hill near Shechem, from which Abimelech fetched wood to burn the tower of Shechem (Judg. ix. 48). But the name, which means 'dark' or 'shady' (cp. Black Mountain, Black Forest), may have been borne by other mountains. If Zalmon near Shechem is intended, it may be mentioned either as a central point in the land, or from its connexion with some historical incident of which no record has been preserved, or simply to heighten the picturesqueness of the simile by representing the snow-storm as seen against the background of the *dark* mountain. *Shaddai*, 'The Almighty', only occurs once again in the Psalter (xci. 1).

15 The hill of God *is as* the hill of Bashan;
A high hill *as* the hill of Bashan.
16 Why leap ye, ye high hills?

(1) Taking the second line as a simile, we may render with R.V.,

When the Almighty scattered kings therein,
(It was as when) it snoweth in Zalmon.

But what is meant by the simile? It has been supposed to refer to the bones of the enemy bleaching on the field of battle (cp. Verg. *Aen.* xii. 36, *campique ingentes ossibus albent*: "The vast plains are white with bones"): or to the glistening of the armour &c. dropped by the fugitives in their flight: but it is far more suggestive to think, not of fallen snow lying on the ground, but of falling snow. The snowflakes driven before the storm are an apt emblem of the kings driven in pell-mell flight by the breath of the Lord, and this explanation suits the context. By the thought of the victory won for Israel by God in spite of the sloth of many an Israelite (*v.* 13) the poet is naturally carried back to the battle-scene, and desires to emphasise the fact that the Almighty had fought for Israel, sweeping the foe before Him like the snowflakes swept along by the hurricane.

(2) Taking the second line literally, we may render with R.V. marg., **It snowed in Zalmon.** The words will then refer to a snowstorm which accompanied and completed the rout of the kings. They can scarcely refer to the hardships endured by those who took up arms amid the rigours of an exceptionally severe winter, in contrast to the luxurious ease of the cowards who are chidden in *v.* 13; still less can they be the words of those cowards excusing themselves from taking part in the war by the severity of the weather.

(3) Some combine the literal and figurative explanations, interpreting *it snowed in Zalmon* to mean that "the mountain clothed itself in a bright garment of light in celebration of the joyful event. Whoever has been in Palestine knows how refreshing is the sight of the distant mountain peaks covered with snow." This however is too far-fetched an explanation to be probable.

15—18. After the conquest of the land. God chose for His abode not the stately mountains of Bashan, whose natural preeminence might seem to mark them out for that privilege, but the insignificant hill of Zion.

15. **A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan:**
An high-peaked mountain is the mountain of Bashan.

Mount Hermon is probably meant, rather than the mountains of Bashan generally. It is the grandest of the mountains of Palestine, and was the northern boundary of Bashan (Deut. iii. 8). It has three summits of nearly equal height. Its natural preeminence seemed to mark it as *a mountain of God*, a mountain worthy to be the abode of God; and the early conquest of Bashan seemed to confirm its prior claim.

16. **Why look ye enviously, ye high-peaked mountains,**
At the mountain which God hath desired for his abode?
Yea, Jehovah will dwell in it for ever.

This is the hill *which* God desireth to dwell in;
Yea, the LORD will dwell *in it* for ever.
The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand, *even* thousands 17
of angels:
The Lord *is* among them, *as in* Sinai, in the holy *place.*

The grander mountains of Bashan, not Hermon only, but the rugged basaltic mountains which rise in precipitous peaks, suggesting ideas of majesty, antiquity, impregnability, are represented as looking enviously upon the insignificant mountain of Zion which God has chosen for His earthly dwelling-place. Sinai had been his temporary abode (Ex. xxiv. 16): on Zion He will dwell for ever. Cp. 1 Kings viii. 12, 13. The choice of Zion is a parable of the method of God's dealings with men. Cp. 1 Cor. i. 26—29.

The A.V. *why leap ye* comes from the Targ., and assumes that the root RTSD, occurring here only, is synonymous with RQD, used in a similar apostrophe, Ps. cxiv. 4, 6. But it is certainly to be explained from the meaning of the same root in Arabic.

17. The chariots of God are in myriads, yea thousands upon thousands.

God is represented as entering Zion in triumph with a vast retinue of the heavenly hosts. His chariots are not simply 'twice ten thousand' but 'counted by tens of thousands' (this is the idiomatic force of the dual termination), explained further as 'thousands of repetition,' i.e. thousands upon thousands. Cp. Dan. vii. 10. The A.V. *angels* is traceable ultimately to the paraphrase of the Targ., suggested by such passages as Deut. xxxiii. 2, but resting on no philological basis. The LXX χιλιάδες εὐθηνούντων, Vulg. *millia laetantium*, 'thousands of joyous ones,' presumes a slightly different reading, but was probably intended to give the same meaning.

the Lord is *among them*, as in *Sinai, in the holy* place] Or, **in the sanctuary** (R.V.); or **in holiness**. But as the words *as in* are not in the text, the rendering **Sinai is in the sanctuary** (R.V. marg.), or, **It is Sinai in holiness**, is preferable. With either rendering the sense will be substantially the same. The glory and majesty which were revealed at Sinai are now transferred to God's new abode. He comes surrounded as it were by an environment of holiness. Cp. Deut. xxxiii. 2. For the use of the name of a place to convey all the associations of the place cp. Mic. vi. 5, where "remember from Shittim unto Gilgal" means "remember all that happened there and in the interval."

Many commentators adopt a slight emendation of the text, and read **The Lord is come from Sinai into the sanctuary** (or, **in holiness**), a reminiscence of Deut. xxxiii. 2. From Sinai, the scene of His first great self-revelation to Israel, He comes to Zion, which He has chosen for His permanent abode. But the corruption of the text if it is faulty must be anterior to all existing versions: and the proposed reading has a somewhat prosaic ring.

e Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive:
Thou hast received gifts for men;
Yea, *for* the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell *among them.*

18. *Thou hast ascended on high*] Lit. *thou hast gone up to the height.* Cp. xlvii. 5. 'The height' elsewhere means heaven, though we find such a phrase as 'the height of Zion' (Jer. xxxi. 12). Probably the poet did not make any sharp distinction between the triumphant return of Jehovah to heaven (as we speak), and the triumphant procession to His earthly abode which was the symbol of it.

thou hast led captivity captive] For the phrase cp. Judg. v. 12. 'Captivity' is not, as the English reader might suppose, a personification of the hostile powers which had led Israel captive, but the abstract for the concrete, equivalent to *a body of captives.* To obviate misunderstanding, R.V. gives 'thy *captivity*.' The captive enemies of Israel are meant, not, as some modern commentators suppose, referring to Is. xxiv. 21 ff., rebellious heavenly powers, nor, as Kay thinks, the Israelites themselves, though 2 Cor. ii. 14 (R.V.) would give a good parallel for this meaning.

thou hast received gifts for men] An impossible rendering, influenced probably by the quotation in Eph. iv. 8. R.V. rightly, **among men.** The 'gifts' offered to the king as Jehovah's representative and appropriated to the service of the Temple (2 Sam. viii. 2, 6, 11; 1 Kings iv. 21), are regarded as offered to Him as the real Conqueror.

yea, for the rebellious also] R.V., **Yea, (among) the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell (with them):** marg., *there.* 'The rebellious' are commonly understood to be the heathen, who pay homage to Jehovah, and dwell under His protection. But (see note on *v.* 6) the term is generally applied to the Israelites; and the line may be rendered, **Yea, even the stubborn (are content) to dwell with Jah Elohim.** Even the successors (in spirit) of the stubborn and rebellious generation of the wilderness are subdued when they see Jehovah's triumphs, and are content to become His obedient subjects. For construction and thought cp. v. 4; Is. xxxiii. 14. Another alternative is to take *Jah* as the subject of the infin., **Yea, even the stubborn (are content) that Jah Elohim should dwell (among them).** Cp. lxxviii. 60; Ex. xxv. 8; &c. So apparently the LXX.

St Paul quotes this verse in Eph. iv. 8 in the form, "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men," applying it to the spiritual gifts showered upon the Church by the risen and ascended Christ. How came he to substitute "gave gifts unto men" for "received gifts among men"? The Targum paraphrases the verse thus; "Thou didst ascend to the firmament, O prophet Moses! thou didst lead captivity captive; thou didst teach the words of the law; thou didst give gifts to the sons of men." Similarly the Syriac, which may have been influenced by Jewish exegesis, has,

Blessed *be* the Lord,
Who daily loadeth us *with benefits*,
Even the God of our salvation. Selah. 19
He that is our God *is* the God of salvation;
And unto GOD the Lord *belong* the issues from death. 20

"Thou didst give gifts to the sons of men." Now though the Targum in its present form is much later than St Paul's time, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the oral paraphrase then current already interpreted the verse in this way, and St Paul quotes it in the form familiar to him, without pausing to think whether it was an exact rendering of the original or not. But though the quotation is not verbally exact it is deeply significant. The triumph of Jehovah over the enemies of Israel prefigured the triumph of Christ over the spiritual enemies of the Church: or rather may we not say more truly that they are both parts of the same divine plan of redemption working first in the natural and then in the spiritual order? Christ ascended up to heaven, leading the defeated powers of evil in triumph (Col. ii. 15). There He performs a yet more royal function than receiving gifts from men, (though of course it would be also true to say that He receives gifts); He bestows them. Spiritual victory corresponds to temporal: the bestowal of gifts of grace to the reception of gifts of homage. For a full discussion of the passage see Driver in *The Expositor*, 1889, i. pp. 20 ff.

19—23. The second part of the Psalm (19—35) begins here. From renewing the triumphs of God in the past the Psalmist turns to the present and the future. God is an ever-present Saviour; He will take vengeance on the enemies of His people.

19. *Blessed* be *the Lord*] We are again reminded of the Song of Deborah, Judg. v. 2, 9.

who *daily loadeth us* with benefits] Better, as R.V., **who daily beareth our burden**: or, as Aq., Symm., Jer. and Targ., **who daily beareth us**. In Is. xlvi. 3, 4, the same word is used in the phrase, "O house of Jacob...which have been borne by me": and in Ex. xix. 4; Deut. i. 31; Ps. xxviii. 9; the idea, though not the word, is the same. The R.V. marg. *Blessed be the Lord day by day: if one oppresseth us, God is our salvation*, involves the abandonment of the traditional accentuation, and gives a less satisfactory sense.

even *the God of our salvation*] In order to avoid the appearance of a grammatical blunder, the R.V. gives, **Even the God who is our salvation**. The whole verse might be rendered more exactly and forcibly:

Blessed be the Lord; day by day he beareth our burden:
God is our salvation.

On the position of *Selah* see note on *v.* 7.

20. God is unto us a God of deliverances;
And unto JEHOVAH the Lord belong the issues from death.

The plural denotes mighty and manifold deliverances. Cp. xliv. 4. GOD is printed in capital letters in the A.V. because it represents the sacred Name, for which *Elōhīm*, 'God,' was substituted by the Jews in

21 But God shall wound the head of his enemies,
And the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his
trespasses.
22 The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan,
I will bring *my people* again from the depths of the sea:

reading, when *Adōnai*, 'Lord' (the regular substitute) is joined with it. Even in regard to death God can provide ways of escape (cp. 1 Cor. x. 13). In the uttermost extremity of peril, when death seems inevitable, He can devise means of deliverance. Nay, though Israel as a nation seems to lie dead in exile, He can bring it forth from that grave and give it new life (1 Sam. ii. 6; Hos. vi. 2; Ezek. xxxvii. 1 ff.).

21. *But God shall wound the head* &c.] **Yea, God shall smite through the head** &c. Cp. Judg. v. 26; Hab. iii. 13, 14.

and *the hairy scalp*] Omit *and*. The warrior's long hair is mentioned not merely as "a sign of exuberant strength and impenitent pride," but in allusion to the ancient practice of allowing the hair to grow when a vow had been undertaken. "With warriors in primitive times the unshorn head was a usual mark of their consecration to the work they had undertaken, and their locks remained untouched till they had achieved their enterprise or had perished in the attempt. War among most primitive peoples is a sacred function." J. S. Black in the *Smaller Cambr. Bible for Schools*, on Judg. v. 2, which should be rendered

"For that flowing locks were worn in Israel,
For that the people volunteered themselves, bless ye the LORD,"

i.e. give thanks for the zeal with which the people devoted themselves to the sacred war of independence. Cp. Deut. xxxii. 42, where "from the beginning of revenges on the enemy" should be rendered "from the hairy head of the enemy."

of such a one &c.] According to strict grammar, **the hairy scalp that goeth on in his guiltiness**, the scalp standing by metonymy for the man. The verb expresses the idea of open and defiant persistence.

22. *The Lord said*] The Psalmist either quotes some ancient promise, like that of Num. xxi. 34, or proclaims a fresh message from God with the authority and in the language of a prophet:—*The Lord saith.* But what is the object of the verb *I will bring again*? (1) If with A.V. we supply *my people*, the meaning will be that God will bring the Israelites back to their own land from all the places in which they have been scattered, in order that they may witness a complete and final triumph over their enemies (cp. Mic. iv. 11—13). This is the interpretation of the Targ., and Delitzsch quotes from the Talmud a touching story which shews that it was current in early times. When, after the destruction of Jerusalem, a number of young and noble captives were being conveyed by ship to Rome, where a fate worse than death awaited them, they all flung themselves from the ship into the sea, trusting to the promise of these words. (2) But the context makes it more natural to supply, as R.V., *them*, i.e. the enemies spoken of in *vv.* 21, 23. Though they hide themselves in the rock fastnesses of

That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of *thine* enemies, 23
And the tongue of thy dogs in the same.

They have seen thy goings, O God; 24
Even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary.
The singers went before, the players on instruments *followed* 25
after;

Bashan, may in the very depths of the sea, they shall not escape, but be brought back to suffer a righteous vengeance. Cp. Am. ix. 2, 3, where Jehovah warns the sinful Israelites that no hiding-place will avail to shelter them from judgement. Bashan may be mentioned with allusion to Og, the depths of the sea with allusion to Pharaoh (Ex. xv. 4 ff.).

23. **That thou mayest dip thy foot in blood,**
That the tongue of thy dogs may have its portion from (thine) enemies.

This rendering of the R.V. probably gives the right sense, though the Heb. presents some difficulties. For *dip* should probably be read *mark*, as in lviii. 10, which passage (with the notes) should be compared. The thought of the approaching vengeance upon the enemies of Israel is a prominent one in Is. xl—lxvi. See e.g. xli. 15 f.; xlix. 26; lxiii. 1 ff. The judgement of the oppressor is in fact the necessary condition of the deliverance of the oppressed, indispensable moreover as the vindication of God's eternal justice.

24—27. These verses describe a solemn procession of thanksgiving to the Temple. But is it past, present, or future? Delitzsch is right when he says that it is "not the rejoicing over a victory lately won, not the rejoicing over the deliverance at the Red Sea in the days of old, but the rejoicing of Israel when it shall have seen the judicial and redemptive act of its God and King." It is an 'ideal' description. The poet's imagination springs forward to the great celebration of the victory described in *vv.* 21—23. It rises before his eyes as an actual fact.

24. *They have seen*] The subject is significantly indefinite: it includes all men, who have been the spectators of the conflict between God and His enemies. Cp. xcviii. 1—3; Is. xl. 5.

thy goings] The festal procession which celebrates God's victory on behalf of His people. He comes in triumph once more, as He came of old.

my King] The title is significant. He has again placed Himself at the head of His people and victoriously manifested His sovereignty. Cp. xliv. 4; lxxiv. 12.

in the sanctuary] R.V. **into the sanctuary**, retaining A.V. in the marg. The preposition implies His rest there after His entry. It is possible also to render as in *v.* 17, *in holiness* (R.V. marg. alt.). His triumph is the vindication of that holiness which is His supreme attribute and distinguishes all His action. Cp. Ex. xv. 11; Ps. lxxvii. 13.

25. *the players on instruments*] R.V. as P.B.V., **the minstrels**.

Among *them were* the damsels playing with timbrels.
26 Bless ye God in the congregations,
Even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.

among them were *the damsels*] An ungrammatical rendering. R.V. rightly, in the midst of the damsels. On either side of the procession of singers and minstrels playing upon stringed instruments were the damsels beating their timbrels (tambourines or hand-drums), as they danced joyously along. The scene recalls the thanksgiving by the Red Sea (Ex. xv. 20), when "Miriam took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances," for "the deliverance which is being celebrated is the counterpart of the deliverance from Egypt." (Delitzsch.)

26. This verse is best regarded as a part of the processional hymn. Cp. Judg. v. 2, 9.

from the fountain of Israel] Kay and Cheyne compare cxviii. 26, cxxxv. 21, and suppose that 'the fountain of Israel' is the Temple. But it is better to render with R.V., and A.V. marg., (ye that are) of the fountain of Israel; the patriarch being regarded as the fountain-head from which the nation is derived. Cp. Is. xlviii. 1, "O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah"; li. 1, 2; and Deut. xxxiii. 28. The address reminds them of the privileges of their ancestry. It is however possible that the preposition *from* is an accidental repetition of the initial letter of the word for 'fountain,' and should be omitted. 'The fountain of Israel' will then be the Lord Himself, the source of His people's life. Cp. Jer. ii. 13; xvii. 13; Ps. xxxvi. 9. The P.B.V. (Great Bible, not Coverdale) *Give thanks, O Israel, unto God the Lord in the congregations, from the ground of the heart* appears to be due to a misunderstanding of Münster's *In congregationibus benedicite deo atque domino ex origine (cordis) Israel*, Israel being wrongly taken as a vocative.

27. The representatives of four tribes are specified as taking part in the procession. Judah and Benjamin naturally represent the South. Jerusalem was on the boundary between them; and the Temple was in the territory assigned to Benjamin (Deut. xxxiii. 12; Josh. xviii. 16), which may account for the place of honour being assigned to it. But why are Zebulun and Naphtali selected to represent the North? Is it as a recognition of their heroic patriotism commemorated in the Song of Deborah (Judg. v. 18) of which this Psalm contains so many reminiscences? or is it (on the assumption of the exilic date of the Psalm) an allusion to the prophecy of Isaiah (ix. 1), that just those tribes which had suffered most severely from the first Assyrian invasion should be restored to honour? This, if the exilic date of the Psalm is adopted, is the most obvious explanation. The prophets from Amos (ix. 11 ff.) and Hosea (iii. 5) onward, foretold the restoration of Israel as well as Judah, and their reunion into one state, and the Psalmist sees this hope visibly fulfilled in the festal procession. It may be noted that in Jer. iii. 17, 18, the restoration of the reunited people is placed in close connexion with the conflux of the nations to worship at Jerusalem of which the Psalmist

There *is* little Benjamin *with* their ruler, 27
The princes of Judah *and* their council,
The princes of Zebulun, *and* the princes of Naphtali.
Thy God hath commanded thy strength: 28
Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.
Because of thy temple at Jerusalem 29
Shall kings bring presents unto thee.

goes on to speak in *vv.* 28 ff. It is important to remember that the Israelites who returned from Babylon regarded themselves as representing the whole nation, and not the kingdom of Judah only. Cp. Ezr. viii. 35; Ps. cxxii. 4.

little Benjamin with *their ruler*] Omit *with*. Benjamin is called *little* as the youngest of the sons of Jacob, and the smallest of the tribes in population and territory (1 Sam. ix. 21). *Their ruler* is explained by the Targ as an allusion to Saul's kingship; "There was Benjamin, small among the tribes, who first went down into the [Red] Sea, and therefore first received the kingdom": by others it is supposed to mean 'conducting them.' The word is obscure and possibly corrupt.

and *their council*] Or, company.

28—31. The purpose and sequel of the restoration of Israel is the conversion of the world; and the Psalmist now prays that God will display His strength and subdue all opposition, and sees the noblest of the nations hastening to pay Him homage.

28. *Thy God* &c.] Israel is addressed; the first line is a summary statement of past experience, introduced as the ground of the prayer which follows. In past times God has given Israel strength; therefore Israel can now pray with confidence for the renewal and continuance of His support. But the Ancient Versions (LXX, Vulg., Symm., Jer. (some MSS.), Syr., Targ.) read (the difference in the verb is simply in the vowels), *O God, command thy strength:* i.e. give charge to Thy power, put it forth. Cp. xlii. 8; xliv. 4. This suits the parallelism better, and avoids the abrupt and isolated address to Israel.

Strengthen, O God &c.] This rendering is grammatically questionable, and the R.V. marg. is to be preferred: *Be strong, O God, thou that hast wrought for us;* i.e. shew Thyself strong as in time past. Cp. Is. xxvi. 12.

29. *Because of thy temple at Jerusalem*] To the age of the Return the restored Temple was the visible symbol and proof that Jehovah had come back to His ancient dwelling-place (cxxii. 9). It was to be the occasion and the centre of fresh homage. Cp. Is. lx. 7 ff.; lxvi. 20; Hagg. ii. 7; Zech. ii. 11 ff.; vi. 15; viii. 21 ff.

From thy temple however is a more natural rendering than *because of thy temple*; and it is possible that the words should be joined with the preceding verse—either thus, *thou that hast wrought for us out of thy temple;* or better still, *shew thyself strong, thou who hast wrought for us,*

30 Rebuke the company of spearmen,
The multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people,
Till every one submit himself with pieces of silver:
Scatter thou the people *that* delight in war.
31 Princes shall come out of Egypt;
Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

out of thy temple[1]; cp. cx. 2. The next line will then begin: *Up to Jerusalem shall kings* &c.

bring presents] A phrase used only in lxxvi. 11; Is. xviii. 7, of bringing solemn tribute to God.

30. *the company of spearmen*] Better as R.V., the wild beast of the reeds, i.e. the crocodile, or rather, the hippopotamus, which is described in Job xl. 21 as lying "in the covert of the reed." It is a symbolical designation of Egypt, which is mentioned either as the typical enemy of Israel, or with reference to circumstances of the time.

the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people] R.V. peoples. The kings or leaders of heathen nations, followed by their peoples as the calves of the herd follow the bulls. Cp. Jer. xlvi. 20, 21, R.V. 'Bulls' suggests the idea of proud defiance; 'calves' that of comfortable security.

till every one *submit himself with pieces of silver*] Lit. as R.V. marg., Every one *submitting himself* &c. Their proud spirits are subdued by the irresistible divine 'rebuke' (lxxvi. 6; Is. xvii. 13); they prostrate themselves in the dust before the Lord of the world, and offer tribute of their wealth. Cp. Is. lx. 9. This gives a fair sense, but the construction is difficult. The difficulty is avoided by the rendering of R.V., which makes the participle refer to God: Trampling under foot the pieces of silver, i.e. spurning the tribute which they bring Thee. The true meaning is however quite uncertain, and the text is very possibly corrupt. The Ancient Versions vary greatly, some of them pointing to varieties of reading. Of the host of modern emendations, one may be mentioned which only requires alteration of the vowel points: 'Trampling under foot *them that delight in silver*'; but it can hardly be pronounced satisfactory.

scatter thou &c.] The Massoretic Text reads: He hath scattered the peoples: a 'prophetic perfect,' realising the triumph of God over all opposition as already complete. But it suits the context better to read the imperative with LXX and Jer., scatter thou. The difference is one of vocalisation only.

31. *Princes*] Or, magnates. LXX πρέσβεις, *ambassadors*. The word occurs here only, and is of doubtful meaning.

shall soon stretch out &c.] R.V., shall haste to stretch out her hands unto God, either in token of submission (cp. Lat. *dare manus*);

[1] The pausal form of the word מֵהֵיכָלֶךָ *out of thy temple*, looks like the trace of a tradition that the verses were once so divided.

Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth;
O sing *praises unto* the Lord; Selah.
To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, *which were* of old;
Lo, he doth send out his voice, *and that* a mighty voice.
Ascribe ye strength unto God:
His excellency *is* over Israel,
And his strength *is* in the clouds.
O God, *thou art* terrible out of thy holy places:

or in supplication (cp. Is. xlv. 14); or with gifts of homage (lxxii. 10; Is. xviii. 7). Egypt and Ethiopia are often coupled together, and they are mentioned here as examples of the nations which come to pay homage, the one as the typical ancient enemy of Israel (cp. Is. xix. 19 ff.), the other as a remote nation of noble appearance and formidable reputation (Is. xviii. 1, 7). Cp. Is. xlv. 14. Their submission signifies that the most inveterate foes of God and His people, and the most remote and the noblest of the peoples of the world, acknowledge His supremacy. *Moorians* in P.B.V. means 'Moors,' 'blackamoors,' the Heb. *Cush* being taken as a general term for 'Africans.'

32—35. All nations are summoned to unite in praising Israel's God.

32. The kingdoms of the earth are invited to reecho Israel's chorus of praise, *v.* 4. Cp. Rev. xi. 15 ff. The musical interlude (*Selah*) may suggest the outbreak of the chorus of universal praise.

33. *To him that rideth* &c.] The same God who "rides through the deserts" (*v.* 4) when He intervenes in human affairs is supremely exalted in the highest heavens (Deut. x. 14; 1 Kings viii. 27; Neh. ix. 6), which like the mountains (Deut. xxxiii. 15) are of primeval antiquity.

which were *of old*] Better, with R.V., **which are of old.** Cp. Wordsworth's "the most ancient heavens."

he doth send out his voice] R.V., **he uttereth his voice,** as xlvi. 6. Cp. xxix. 3 ff.; Is. xxx. 30.

34. *Ascribe* &c.] Lit. as in xxix. 1, *give.* Acknowledge by the tribute of your praises the power which is His and which He exercises in the world.

His excellency, or *majesty, is over Israel* to protect and bless, *and his strength is in the skies,* supreme not on earth alone, but throughout the universe. This and the last verse are based upon Deut. xxxiii. 26,

> "There is none like God (*El*), O Jeshurun,
> Who rideth upon the heavens as thy help,
> And in his excellency on the skies."

35. *O God,* thou art *terrible* &c.] This rendering is retained in R.V., but grammar requires us to render (cp. R.V. marg.); **Terrible is God out of thy sanctuary.** Israel is addressed: and the verse is the answer of the nations to the summons of *v.* 34, acknowledging the awful might (Ex. xv. 11; Deut. x. 17; Ps. xlvii. 2) which God displays

The God of Israel *is* he
That giveth strength and power unto *his* people.
Blessed *be* God.

from His sanctuary in the midst of Israel (cp. *v.* 29 note), recognising Him as the source of Israel's preeminence, and in conclusion reechoing Israel's watchword of praise, *Blessed be God.* Simpler but less forcible is the reading of LXX and Jer., *out of his sanctuary*, making the verse the Psalmist's own conclusion.

thy holy places] Better, **thy sanctuary**, as the word is generally rendered (Ex. xv. 17; Ps. lxxviii. 69; xcvi. 6, &c.). The plural is an idiomatic plural of 'extension' or 'amplification,' denoting the various parts of the Temple, or its dignity.

the God of Israel is *he that giveth*] Better as R.V., **the God of Israel, he giveth** &c.

power] Or, **mightiness**. The subst. is found here only, but the adj. is common, cp. Deut. iv. 38; Is. lx. 22.

unto his *people*] Cp. xxix. 11; Is. xl. 29. Lit., **the people**, which stands out among the nations of the world as the people of His choice.

Thus the Psalmist's outlook reaches forward to the final triumph celebrated in the Apocalyptic song, Rev. xv. 3 f.

PSALM LXIX.

This plaintive cry for help falls into two divisions, each of which may be subdivided into three stanzas.

i. The Psalmist entreats God to rescue him from the deadly foes who beset him (1—6). He urges as the ground of his prayer that it is for God's sake that he is being persecuted (7—12); and then with more strenuous insistence repeats his cry for help (13—18).

ii. Once more he lays before God all the inhumanity of his persecutors (19—21); and, goaded by the recollection of their behaviour, imprecates upon them the judgement they deserve (22—28). Regaining his calmness, he looks forward with confidence to his deliverance and consequent thanksgiving; and concludes with a call to universal praise for the redemption and restoration of Zion which God will assuredly accomplish (29—36).

The name of David stands in the title, but though the Psalm may have been taken from a collection bearing his name, it is impossible to suppose that it was written by him. To what period of his life could *vv.* 8 ff. refer, or how can *vv.* 33 ff. be connected with his reign? These latter verses, which cannot be detached from the Psalm as a later liturgical addition, point decidedly to the Exile, or to the closing years of the kingdom, when Jehoiachin and the flower of the population of Judah had already been carried into captivity (B.C. 597), and the final downfall of the state was imminent. The latter alternative is the most probable; and the circumstances, ideas, and language of the Psalmist so remarkably resemble those of Jeremiah, that it has been conjectured

with much plausibility that he was the author of the Psalm. It is not indeed to be supposed that the metaphorical expressions of *vv.* 1, 2, 14, 15 are a literal description of his sufferings in the dungeon of Malchiah, (ch. xxxviii. 6 ff.), or that the Psalm was composed as he lay there, though the language may have been partly suggested by his treatment upon that occasion; and it is of course impossible positively to affirm that it was written by him; but it is certainly to the Book of Jeremiah that we must turn for the most vivid illustration of the circumstances and the feelings of the Psalmist. If Jeremiah was not the author, it must have been some prophet of a kindred temper of mind under very similar circumstances.

(1) The general situation of the Psalmist corresponds remarkably to that of Jeremiah as he describes it himself in chaps. xi. 18 ff., xii. 1 ff., xv. 10 ff., xvii. 12 ff., xviii. 18 ff., xx. 7 ff., and elsewhere. His words, "Know that for thy sake I bear reproach" (xv. 15), might be taken as the motto of the Psalm. Like Jeremiah, the Psalmist is the victim of contempt which crushes his spirits and hostility which threatens his life. His persecutors are not heathen foreigners, but godless fellow-countrymen; and even his own relations have deserted him.

(2) The Psalmist's imprecations of judgement on his enemies find a close parallel in the passages already referred to: and the prediction of the restoration of Judah with which the Psalm closes is a brief summary of Jeremiah's prophecies collected in chaps. xxx—xxxiii. The Psalmist's intense depression of spirit and sudden changes of feeling are very characteristic of Jeremiah. Cp. e.g., Jer. xx. 13.

(3) The language of the Psalm is full of coincidences with the language of Jeremiah, which will be pointed out in the notes.

In such a case proof is impossible, but it will give point and reality to the Psalm, if we hear in it the voice of the martyr-prophet to whom was assigned the bitter task of delivering God's message to a hardened and impenitent people, by whom it was received with indifference or open contempt: who, while divinely strengthened to deliver that message with unflinching courage, and inspired to look forward with unshaken faith to the rise of a nobler order out of the ruins of the old, yet in moments of human weakness almost lost his own personal trust in God, and became the prey of impatience and despair[1].

No Psalm, with the exception of Ps. xxii, is so frequently quoted in the N.T. The experience of the Psalmist (*v.* 4) was 'fulfilled' in the causeless hatred of the Jews for the Son of God (John xv. 25). The consuming zeal of Jesus for the honour of His Father's desecrated house brought the words of *v.* 9 to the minds of His disciples (John ii. 17): and the rest of the same verse is applied by St Paul to Christ, Who pleased not Himself, but voluntarily bore the reproaches intended for God (Rom. xv. 3). The words of *v.* 25 are combined with those of cix. 8 in Acts i. 20, to describe the doom of the traitor; and *vv.* 22, 23 are applied in Rom. xi. 9 ff. to the rejection of apostate Israel. The physical sufferings of the Psalmist (*v.* 21) foreshadowed those of

[1] The writer would refer to his *Doctrine of the Prophets*, Lect. xi., for a sketch of the life and work of Jeremiah.

Christ (St John xix. 28 f.); and though he does not expressly quote it, the passage seems to have been in the mind of St Matthew (xxvii. 34, 48) in his description of the Passion. *Vv.* 12, 20 point forward to the mockery (Matt. xxvii. 27 ff.); and as we read *v.* 26 in the light of Is. liii and Zech. xiii. 7, its typical significance is obvious.

Yet the Psalm is not prediction but description, and much of it is plainly not applicable to Christ. The confession of sin in *v.* 5, and the imprecations of vengeance (*vv.* 22 ff.), are wholly unsuited to the meek and sinless Jesus. It is prophetic only inasmuch as the experience of each suffering servant of God who endured reproach and persecution for God's sake under the old covenant was in some measure a type and foreshadowing of the experience of the true and perfect Servant of the Lord. Even the details of their lives were shaped so as to correspond to details in the life of Christ: and these details serve to attract attention and to point to the inner correspondence by which He gathered up and 'fulfilled' the experience of the saints and servants of God who had gone before. Jeremiah was a type of Christ: but he and others like him were but partial and imperfect types: there was much in their lives and characters which shewed that they were men compassed with infirmity: but in the antitype the imperfections disappear, and the true Son of Man, the perfect Servant of the Lord, stands revealed. On the 'Passion Psalms' in general see *Introd.* pp. lxxix f.

For a discussion of the imprecations of *vv.* 22 ff., which startle and shock the Christian reader, see *Introd.* pp. lxxxviii ff. Here it may suffice to remark that if the reader would be fair to Jeremiah (or the unknown author) he must endeavour to realise the intense provocation to which Jeremiah was subjected. He must remember that they are to be judged by the standard of the Law, and not by the spirit of the Gospel. He must bear in mind that they are not merely or mainly the utterance of personal vindictiveness, but the expression of a burning desire for the manifestation of the righteous judgement of God upon those who resisted His will and persecuted His servants.

This Psalm should be compared with Pss. xxii and xl; it has also points of connexion with Pss. xxxi, xxxviii, xliv; and in its imprecations it stands midway between Pss. xxxv and cix.

Its typical character explains its selection as a Proper Psalm for Good Friday.

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, *A Psalm* of David.

69 Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto *my* soul.

On the title **For the Chief Musician; set to Shoshannim**, i.e. *lilies*, see note on the title of Ps. xlv.

1—6. The Psalmist appeals to God for help, pleading the extremity of his plight.

1. *the waters* &c.] He is like a drowning man. The flood of calamity has risen till it threatens his life. For the metaphor cp. xviii. 16; xxxii. 6; lxvi. 12; cxxiv. 4; Lam. iii. 54; and for *unto my soul* see Jer. iv. 10, 18; Jon. ii. 5.

I sink in deep mire, where *there is* no standing:
I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.
I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried:
Mine eyes fail while *I* wait for my God.
They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head:
They that would destroy me, *being* mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty:
Then I restored *that* which I took not away.

2. He is like a man floundering in a morass or quicksand where there is no footing and his struggles only plunge him deeper, or fording a river and in imminent danger of being swept away by the current. Quagmires, 'treacherous to the last degree,' are common in Palestine. See Thomson's *Land and the Book*, p. 360; and Dr Tristram's description of the vast and impenetrable swamp of Huleh, where a false step off the roots of the papyrus "will take the intruder over head in suffocating peat mud." *Land of Israel*, p. 579.

the floods overflow me] Or, *the current*—'Shibbōleth,' Judg. xii. 6—*sweeps me away.*

3. He is worn out and exhausted in mind and body by the prolonged strain of prayer unanswered. Cp. xxii. 1, 2, 15; vi. 7; Jer. xlv. 3; Ps. cxix. 82, 123; Lam. ii. 11, iv. 17. For *I am weary of* &c., render with R.V. **I am weary with my crying.**

4. The number and the virulence of his foes, and the groundlessness of their hostility. For the language comp. xl. 12; xxxv. 19; xxxviii. 19. The quotation in John xv. 25 agrees with the LXX.

more] This archaism for 'more,' which has disappeared from modern Bibles, is restored by Scrivener in accordance with the original edition of 1611.

they that would destroy me] R.V., **they that would cut me off.** Ewald and others follow the Syr. in reading this line, 'More numerous *than my bones* are they that are mine enemies falsely.' The parallelism of the first two lines of the verse is improved by the change, which involves only a slight alteration of the consonants; but the comparison is not a natural one, and the reading of the text is supported by the use of the same verb in Lam. iii. 53, in a closely similar context (note *vv.* 52, 54).

wrongfully] Lit. *falsely.* Their hostility is based upon misconception and misrepresentation.

then I restored] Or, as R.V. marg., *I had to restore.* 'Then' may refer to some signal instance prominent in the Psalmist's recollection.

that *which I took not away*] **That which I had not plundered.** Perhaps a proverbial expression for the extreme of injured innocence. He was accused of being an extortioner and oppressor of the poor who must be made to disgorge his ill-gotten gains (Ezek. xxxiii. 15). Cp Eliphaz' charges against Job (xxii. 6 ff.), and Zophar's picture of the wicked man compelled to make restitution (xx. 18 ff.).

5 O God, thou knowest my foolishness;
And my sins are not hid from thee.
6 Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake:
Let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel.
7 Because for thy sake I have borne reproach;
Shame hath covered my face.
8 I am become a stranger unto my brethren,
And an alien unto my mother's children.
9 For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;

5, 6. Chastisement is not undeserved; but he commits himself to the mercy of the Omniscient, and pleads for a hearing on the ground that the cause of all God's servants is bound up with his cause. If he is abandoned they must be discouraged and exposed to the contempt of the world.

Thou is emphatic. Similar appeals to God's omniscience are characteristic of Jeremiah (ch. xii. 3; xv. 15; xvii. 16; xviii. 23). Sin is designated as 'foolishness' in Ps. xxxviii. 5, where, as here, the Psalmist acknowledges that his sufferings are the chastisement of his sin. This is the only other passage in which the word occurs, except in the Book of Proverbs, where it is common.

sins] Lit. *guiltinesses*; cp. lxviii. 21.

6. Let not those that wait on thee be ashamed through me, O Lord, Jehovah of hosts:
Let not those that seek thee be brought to dishonour through me, O God of Israel.

Cp. xxv. 3; xxxviii. 15, 16. The divine titles are significant. They appeal to God's sovereignty and to His relation to His people. Surely, since He has the power to prevent it, He cannot leave the true Israel to be the scorn of its foes, as will happen *through me*, or, *in my case*, if I am left to perish unregarded.

7—12. Such discouragement must be the inevitable consequence if he is abandoned, for it is for God's sake that he is persecuted and defamed. Comp. the plea of the nation in xliv. 14 ff.

7. So Jeremiah pleads, "Know that for thy sake I bear reproach" (xv. 15). *shame* &c.] cp. xliv. 15.

8. Even his nearest relations treat him as a stranger and a foreigner. Cp. xxxviii. 11; Job xix. 13 ff.; Jer. xii. 6.

my mother's children] The sons of my own mother expresses a closer degree of relationship than *my brethren*, the children of the same mother being always regarded as bound to one another by a closer tie than those of the same father by different mothers. Cp. l. 20.

9. His jealousy for the honour of God's house was like a consuming fire within him. Cp. cxix. 139; xxxix. 3; Jer. xx. 9. It is difficult to

And the reproaches of them that reproached thee
are fallen upon me.
When I wept, *and chastened* my soul with fasting, 10
That was to my reproach.
I made sackcloth also my garment; 11
And I became a proverb to them.
They that sit in the gate speak against me; 12

determine whether 'this house' means the Temple only, or as in Num. xii. 7, Hos. viii. 1, bears the wider meaning of the land or the people of Israel. (1) In the former case the reference may be to the burning indignation which was stirred by the sight of abominations such as those which Ezekiel describes as polluting the Temple (ch. viii); and it is noteworthy that he particularly mentions "the image of jealousy which provoketh to jealousy," i.e. some image or symbol which was a direct challenge of the "jealous God" who could brook no rival, and which must have stirred the grief and indignation of His faithful servants. (2) In the latter case it is the general condition of the nation, the contrast between its calling to be a holy nation and the universal corruption prevalent, which stirs his deepest emotion. This alternative gains some support from Jeremiah's usage (xi. 15; xii. 7; xxiii. 11).

The zeal of Christ for His Father's desecrated house recalled these words to the minds of His disciples (John ii. 17: the reading of the true text follows the LXX (B), *shall eat me up*).

the reproaches &c.] Better as R.V., the reproaches of them that reproach thee are fallen upon me. On the one hand their blasphemies against God wound and crush the spirit of His servant; and on the other hand they shew their contempt for God by their mockery of His servant. Such was Jeremiah's experience: his contemporaries mocked God's message, and mocked him for delivering it (ch. vi. 10: xx. 8): such too was the experience of Christ Himself, to whom St Paul applies these words in Rom. xv. 3.

10. 11. When I wept, (and chastened) my soul with fasting,
It was turned to reproaches for me:
When I made sackcloth my clothing,
I became a byword unto them.

In shame and penitence for the dishonour done by his countrymen to God, he fasted and mourned; but they only mocked and derided him for doing what they ought to have done themselves (Jer. iv. 8; vi. 26).

The construction of the first line is anomalous. Probably the word for 'wept' is a corruption of some word for 'humbled' (xxxv. 13) or 'chastened.' For *byword* cp. xliv. 14.

12. **They that sit in the gate talk of me,**
And the songs of them that drink strong drink (make sport of me).

In the gate where men gather to hear the last gossip as well as to transact business (ix. 14; Jer. xvii. 19 f.) he is the talk of the city: his

And *I was* the song of the drunkards.

13 But *as for* me, my prayer *is* unto thee, O LORD, *in* an
acceptable time:
O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth
of thy salvation.

14 Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink:
Let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of
the deep waters.

15 Let not the waterflood overflow me,
Neither let the deep swallow me up,
And let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.

16 Hear me, O LORD; for thy lovingkindness *is* good;
Turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender
mercies.

austerities and oddities furnish a subject for the latest comic song of the revellers' parties. Cp. Lam. iii. 14; Job xxx. 9; Is. v. 11, 12, 22; Am. vi. 4 ff.

13—18. From the heartlessness of men he turns to the mercy of God.

13. It is best to divide the clauses somewhat differently:

But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Jehovah,
At the time thou pleasest, O God, in the abundance of thy lovingkindness,
Answer me in the truth of thy salvation.

In an acceptable time, lit. *a time of good pleasure* (xl. 13; li. 18) is most naturally connected with *answer me*, as in Is. xlix. 8. "In an acceptable time have I answered thee." He cannot tell that it is yet God's will to deliver him, but he can be sure that the time will come, for God has revealed Himself to be a God "abundant in lovingkindness and truth" (Ex. xxxiv. 6), and if He is true to His character, He must save His servant. Cp. li. 1.

14, 15. In his prayer he repeats the words which he had previously used to describe his plight (*vv.* 2, 4). It is difficult to see why the R.V. has substituted *overwhelm* for *overflow* here and not in *v.* 2, the Heb. word being the same in both cases.

let not the pit &c.] Either the grave (lv. 23), or a dungeon (Lam. iii. 53, 55), may be meant. In the latter case Jeremiah's experience (ch. xxxviii. 6) may have suggested the metaphor; but the words are not to be understood literally of release from Malchiah's dungeon.

16. *Hear me*] **Answer me.**

for thy lovingkindness is *good*] **So cix. 21.**

turn unto me &c.] **According to the abundance of thy compassions turn thee unto me.** Cp. li. 1 note; Lam. iii. 32. 'Turning' or 'look-

And hide not thy face from thy servant; 17
For I am in trouble: hear me speedily.
Draw nigh unto my soul, *and* redeem it: 18
Deliver me because of mine enemies.

Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my 19
dishonour:
Mine adversaries *are* all before thee.
Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heavi- 20
ness:
And I looked *for some* to take pity, but *there was* none;
And for comforters, but I found none.
They gave me also gall for my meat; 21
And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

ing' unto him (xxv. 16; cxix. 132) is the opposite of that 'hiding of God's face' which he deprecates in the next verse.

17. The Psalmist pleads his calling: surely God cannot continue to withhold His favour and help from one who is bound to His service and devoted to His cause. The plea would have special force if the Psalmist was a prophet like Jeremiah (Am. iii. 7). Cp. xxvii. 9; xxxi. 16; xliv. 24; &c.

for I am in trouble &c.] Because I am in a strait, answer me speedily.

18. *Draw nigh*] Cp. the acknowledgement of answered prayer in Lam. iii. 57, 58, 'Thou drewest nigh in the day when I called upon thee...thou redeemedst my life."

deliver me] Or, as R.V., ransom me. Cp. Jer. xv. 21.

because of mine enemies] Who will triumph if I am abandoned to their malice, and by whose triumph the honour of the God whom I serve will suffer. Cp. xiii. 4.

19—21. Once more he lays before God the severity of his sufferings, and the inhumanity of his enemies.

19. *Thou hast known*] Rather, THOU knowest. *Thou*, as in *v.* 5, is emphatic. See note there for references to Jeremiah's use of this phrase.

all before thee] They are all in Thy sight. He pleads with God as he might with men, who are more easily moved to pity by the sight of suffering than by merely hearing of it.

20. *hath broken my heart*] Cp. Jer. xxiii. 9.

I am full of heaviness] Or, as R.V. marg., *sore sick*. A cognate word is frequently used in Jer., e.g. xv. 18, A.V. *incurable*.

and I looked &c.] Or, *and I waited for some to sympathise, but there was no one.*

21. This verse is connected with the preceding one. Not content with merely refusing sympathy, they aggravated and embittered his

22 Let their table become a snare before them:
And *that which should have been* for *their* welfare,
let it become a trap.

sufferings, as though one were to mock a hungry man by offering him bitter and poisonous food, or a thirsty man by giving him sour and undrinkable wine. The language is plainly metaphorical: cp. Jer. viii. 14; ix. 15; xxiii. 15. The Heb. word *rôsh*, rendered πικρία LXX χολή, Vulg. and Jer. *fel*), denotes some bitter and poisonous plant, which cannot however be identified with certainty. Tristram (*Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 447) thinks that the Poppy is the plant intended. "*Papaver arenarium* grows everywhere in Palestine; it springs up very quickly in cornfields, and its juice is most bitter and poisonous."

Vinegar cannot here mean the thin sour wine which was used as a refreshing beverage (Num. vi. 3; Ruth ii. 14), but such as had gone bad and become nauseous and unfit to drink.

Allusion seems to be made to this passage in St Matthew's account of the Crucifixion (xxvii. 34), though it is not actually quoted; and St John expressly says that the cry "I thirst" was uttered "that the scripture might be accomplished[1]."

22–28. At the thought of the intolerable inhumanity of his enemies he can no longer restrain himself, and breaks out into fierce imprecation. Some commentators, feeling the difficulty of such imprecations proceeding from the Psalmist, have regarded these verses as the utterance of the Psalmist's enemies, invoking destruction upon him and his companions. But such an interpretation is unnatural: the pronouns 'their' and 'they' in *vv.* 22 ff. cannot have a different reference from 'they' in *v.* 21.

22. **Let their table before them become a snare;**
Yea, when they are at peace, let it become a trap.

The language is suggested by the metaphors of the preceding verse. They had aggravated the sufferings of a joyless life: let their own enjoyments turn to their ruin. The idea of the transformation of their table into a snare becomes more intelligible if it is remembered that the table meant was probably a piece of leather unrolled and spread upon the ground, such as is still used in the East. The curse is intensified by the prayer that this fate may overtake them while they are in unsuspecting security. Cp. 1 Thess. v. 3. The rendering of the A.V., which is substantially the same as that of the P.B.V., is untenable. It was introduced into the 'Great Bible' from Munster's Latin Version *et quae in pacem* (*esse debuerant sint*) *in offendiculum*, and was doubtless derived by him from the Jewish scholar Kimchi.

The quotation of this verse in Rom. xi. 9 is made freely from the LXX, supplemented probably by a reminiscence of xxxv. 8 (xxxiv). The following verse is quoted exactly as it stands in the LXX.

[1] The 'Gospel of Peter' (ch. 5) represents the potion of "gall with vinegar" as poison administered to hasten death.

Let their eyes be darkened, that *they* see not; 23
And make their loins continually to shake.
Pour out thine indignation upon them, 24
And let thy wrathful anger take hold of them.
Let their habitation be desolate; 25
And let none dwell in their tents.
For they persecute *him* whom thou hast smitten; 26
And they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.
Add iniquity unto their iniquity: 27
And let them not come into thy righteousness.

23. Let the eyes which gloated over another's misfortunes be blinded: let the limbs which are the seat of the strength they have abused be palsied.

24. Cp. lxxix. 6; Jer. x. 25. *and let* &c.] R.V., **and let the fierceness of thine anger overtake them.**

25. *their habitation*] Rather, as R.V. marg., **their encampment**; cp. Gen. xxv. 16; Num. xxxi. 10; Ezek. xxv. 4 (R.V.). The language is a survival from the habits of a nomad life, with which however the Israelites must always have been familiar. Cp. Jer. iv. 20; x. 20. To the Oriental no prospect was more terrible than that of the complete extermination of his family. Cp. Job xviii. 19; Prov. xiv. 11.

The quotation in Acts i. 20 is a free adaptation of the LXX.

26. *For they persecute* &c.] They had no commission to aggravate the sufferings of one who was already smitten with the rod of chastisement by God Himself. We think of Job and his friends (xix. 21, 22), and of the Suffering Servant of Jehovah (Is. liii. 4). Cp. Is. xlvii. 6.

they talk to the grief] R.V., **they tell of the sorrow**, or as marg., **the pain**. The LXX and Syr. represent a reading which suits the parallelism better: "*they add to the sorrow*."

him *whom thou hast smitten*] The plural of the next line suggests the rendering *those whom* &c., which the Heb. admits: but the A.V. follows the Ancient Versions in giving the singular.

those whom thou hast wounded] Cp. cix. 22, "my heart is wounded within me." Note that the Psalmist is not alone in his suffering.

27. Some commentators, retaining the A.V. rendering of *v.* 26, regard *vv.* 27, 28 as the words of the Psalmist's enemies, directed against him and his fellow sufferers. This interpretation has been advocated, as removing from the mouth of the Psalmist at any rate the most terrible anathemas. But perplexing as it may be, it is far more natural to see in these verses the climax of his imprecations.

Add iniquity &c.] Instead of taking away their iniquities by forgiveness, let one iniquity accumulate upon another till they are crushed by the load. Cp. xxxviii. 4; Jer. xviii. 23.

let them not come into thy righteousness] Let them have no share in the manifestation of that righteousness or faithfulness to His covenant in virtue of which Jehovah pardons sin and delivers from danger. Cp. v. 8; lxxi. 2, 15, 19, 24.

28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living,
And not be written with the righteous.

29 But I *am* poor and sorrowful:
Let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.
30 I will praise the name of God with a song;
And will magnify him with thanksgiving.
31 *This* also shall please the LORD better than an ox
Or bullock that hath horns *and* hoofs.
32 The humble shall see *this, and* be glad:
And your heart shall live that seek God.
33 For the LORD heareth the poor,

28. *the book of the living*] Or, as R.V., the book of life. The figure is borrowed from the lists or registers of citizens (Jer. xxii. 30; Ezek. xiii. 9). God has a book in which the names of those who are to be preserved alive are inscribed. The righteous have their names recorded in it (cp. Hab. ii. 4). May the names of these malefactors be struck out, or never inserted there! May they be deprived of their privileges as Israelites! May they perish and be utterly forgotten! Cp. Ex. xxxii. 32; Is. iv. 3; Dan. xii. 1. But—and this mitigates what would otherwise be the awful character of the imprecation—'the book of life' is not here to be understood in the full N.T. sense as 'the book of eternal life' (Luke x. 20; Phil. iv. 3; Rev. iii. 5; xiii. 8, xvii. 8; xx. 12).

29—36. In contrast to the fate which his enemies deserve, the Psalmist looks forward to his own deliverance, and predicts the restoration of Jerusalem and the reestablishment there of the true people of God. Such a sudden change of tone is quite characteristic of Jeremiah, e.g. xx. 13.

29. **But as for me, who am afflicted and sore pained,**
Thy salvation, O God, shall set me up on high.

The verb may be rendered as a prayer (A.V.), or as an expression of confidence (P.B.V.). God's deliverance will set him as it were in a high fortress, out of the reach of his enemies. Cp. lix. 1 note.

31. **And it shall please Jehovah better than an ox,**
(Or) a bullock that hath horns and hoofs.

The Massoretic accentuation makes one clause of the verse, reading it *better than an ox-bullock*: but the division of the clauses adopted by R.V. is preferable. The epithets are not merely ornamental: the horns shew that the animal is of full age; the hoofs allude to the definition of 'clean' animals in Lev. xi. 3 ff. But spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving are more acceptable than the most perfect animal victim. Cp. Pss. l, li.

32. **When the meek see it, they shall be glad:**
Ye that seek after God, let your heart revive.

Cp. xxii. 26, and with *v.* 33 cp. xxii. 24.

33. *the poor*] R.V. the needy, as ix. 18, Jer. xx. 13, and frequently.

And despiseth not his prisoners.
Let the heaven and earth praise him, 34
The seas, and every *thing* that moveth therein.
For God will save Zion, 35
And will build the cities of Judah:
That they may dwell there, and have it in possession.
The seed also of his servants shall inherit it: 36
And they that love his name shall dwell therein.

his prisoners] Though He has cast them into the prison of captivity for their sins, He will not reject their prayers. Cp. xxii. 24; cii. 17, 20; cvii. 10 ff. After the capture of the city in B.C. 597, all the best part of the nation was carried into captivity.

34. All creation is summoned to join in a chorus of praise to God for the redemption of Zion, for it is an event of universal significance. Cp. Is. xliv. 23.

35. So Jeremiah couples 'Jerusalem and the cities of Judah,' xxxiii. 10 ff., xxxiv. 7: and the prediction of restoration corresponds to the prophecies collected in his 'Book of Consolation,' chaps. xxx—xxxiii. The language does not presume that Jerusalem was already in ruins, any more than do those prophecies.

that they may dwell there] Better, and men shall abide there.

36. Cp. Is. lxv. 9, 23.

they that love his name] Cp. v. 11; cxix. 132. The citizens of Zion will all be true Israelites, faithfully observing the first and great commandment of the law (Deut. vi. 4, 5, 13).

PSALM LXX.

This short prayer for speedy help and the discomfiture of malicious enemies is a repetition of Ps. xl. 13—17 with some slight variations. *Jehovah* has been changed to *God* in *vv.* 1*a*, 4*c*, and *Lord* to *God* in 5*b*, according to the usual practice of the editor of the Elohistic collection; but *Jehovah* has been retained in *v.* 1*b* and substituted for *my God* in *v.* 5*d* for the sake of variety, where *God* occurs in the same verse. In other respects Ps. xl appears to present a more original text. On the relation of these verses to the rest of Ps. xl, see Introd. to that Psalm. Probably, as the title suggests, they were detached from Ps. xl for liturgical purposes.

The title *to bring to remembrance*, prefixed also to Ps. xxxviii, has commonly been explained to refer to the contents of the Psalm, either as a record of suffering, or as a prayer intended to bring the suppliant to God's remembrance. But more probably it should be rendered, *to make memorial* (R.V. marg.), or, *for making the memorial* (LXX εἰς ἀνάμνησιν as in Lev. xxiv. 7; cp. Num. x. 10), and explained as a note of the liturgical use of the Psalm either in connexion with the offering of incense, or at the offering of the *Asâmâ*. (1) The phrase *to make a*

memorial of incense occurs in Is. lxvi. 3; and for the connexion of prayer with offering of incense see Num. xvi. 46 ff.; Luke i. 9, 10. The Targum suggests this reference in its double rendering, *To remember concerning the use of incense*. (2) The *Azkara* or *Memorial* was a technical term in the Levitical ritual (*a*) for the portion of the 'meal-offering' mixed with oil and burnt with incense on the altar (Lev. ii. 2); (*b*) for the incense placed on the shewbread and afterwards burnt (Lev. xxiv. 7). Though probably the term originally meant only 'a fragrant offering' (see Dillmann on Lev. ii. 2), it was interpreted to mean 'a memorial' (LXX *μνημόσυνον*, Vulg. *memoriale*) as bringing the offerer to God's remembrance. There may be an allusion to the use of Psalms in connexion with the *Azkârâ* in 1 Chr. xvi. 4, where *to celebrate* (R.V.) is the same word as that used here.

The liturgical use of the Psalm must have arisen in days of national distress and persecution, and implies the application of the Psalm to the nation. A hint of this national application is given in the Targum of *v.* 1*a*, "O God make haste to deliver *us*."

To the chief Musician, *A Psalm* of David, to bring to remembrance.

70 *Make haste*, O God, to deliver me;
Make haste to help me, O LORD.
2 Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul:
Let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt.
3 Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame

1. Make haste] The words, as the italics indicate, are not in the Hebrew; and as the text stands, we must either supply *make haste* from the next line, or render according to the Heb. idiom found in Is. xxxviii. 20, *God is ready to deliver me*. But probably the first word of the verse as it stands in xl. 13 should be restored, **Be pleased**. This word would be a link of connexion with lxix. 13, *in a time when thou pleasest*. *make haste to help me*] Cp. xxii. 19; xxxviii. 22.

2. The whole verse is a repetition, with variations, of xxxv. 4, 26 (cp. xxxviii. 12); and *vv.* 3—5 recall *vv.* 21, 25, 27, 10, of the same Psalm.

that seek after my soul] Or, **that seek my life**. The text of Ps. xl. 13 is fuller, 'Let them be...confounded *together*...my life *to destroy it*.'

let them be turned backward &c.] Render with R.V.,

Let them be turned backward and brought to dishonour
That delight in my hurt.

With the last line contrast xxxv. 27.

3. *Let them be turned back*] **Let them turn back**, retreating after their ignominious repulse (*v.* 2). Cp. vi. 10. The reading of xl. 15 is *let them be desolate*. The difference probably arose out of a confusion between the letters M and B (בושו—בשמו), but may be due to intentional

That say, Aha, aha.
Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: 4
And let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God
be magnified.
But I *am* poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: 5
Thou *art* my help and my deliverer;
O LORD, make no tarrying.

alteration. *for a reward of their shame*] Better as R.V., by reason of their shame, being foiled in their malicious plans.

Aha, aha] An exclamation of malicious pleasure at another's misfortune. Cp. xxxv. 21, 25. The text of xl. 15 reads 'that say *unto me*'; and so the LXX here, from which it has passed through the Vulg. into the P.B.V., 'that cry over me.'

4. Cp. xxxv. 27. The discomfiture of the wicked gives occasion for the righteous to rejoice in God, not only because they are set free from persecution, but because they see in it the proof of God's righteous sovereignty and the unfolding of His purposes of salvation.

such as love thy salvation] Cp. "they that love his name" (lxix. 36); and the corresponding N.T. thought in 2 Tim. iv. 8.

5. *But I* &c.] But as for me, who am afflicted and needy. Cp. lxix. 29, 33; ix. 18; xxxv. 10; xxxvii. 14; lxxxvi. 1; cix. 22.

make haste unto me, O God] So cxli. 1. The text of xl. 17, "The Lord will take thought for me," glancing back at "thy thoughts to usward" in *v.* 5, is probably the original reading. The variation here may have been introduced for the sake of closer parallelism to *make no tarrying.* *my help*, as xxxiii. 20: *my deliverer*, as xviii. 2, 48, a different word from that used in *v.* 1.

O LORD] In xl. 17, *O my God.* *make no tarrying*] Cp. Daniel's prayer (ix. 19, A.V. *defer not*), and the promise in Is. xlvi. 13.

PSALM LXXI.

Though this Psalm, like Ps. lxxxvi, is little more than a mosaic of fragments and reminiscences of other Psalms, especially xxii, xxxi, xxxv, xl, it possesses a singular beauty and tenderness of its own. It is the utterance of a faith which has proved the goodness of God in a life of many trials, and trusts to experience it to the end. It is fitly chosen for use in the Order for the Visitation of the Sick.

Some commentators regard it as a 'national' Psalm, taking the plural 'us' in *v.* 20 (R.V.) as the key to its interpretation, and supposing the speaker to be not an individual, but suffering Israel. The language of *vv.* 5, 6, 9, 17, is not a fatal objection to this theory; for many passages speak of the birth and youth and old age of Israel (cxxix. 1; Hos. vii. 9, xi. 1; Jer. ii. 2; Is. xlvi. 3, 4). But the transition from the singular to the plural in *v.* 20 is no proof that the Psalm as a whole is the utterance of

the nation. It was most natural that the Psalmist should pass from the thought of his own needs to the thought of the needs of the nation, in whose calamity he was involved. Doubtless the language of the Psalm is such as could be adopted by others, or even by the godly nucleus of Israel as a whole; but it bears in the main the stamp of a personal and individual meditation.

As to authorship and date, all that can be said is that apparently the Psalmist was an old man (*vv.* 9, 18), and that Israel was in exile (*v.* 20). The latter part of the LXX title, '[A Psalm.] of the sons of Jonadab and those who were first carried captive,' may preserve an authentic tradition of its use in the exile. It has been attributed to Jeremiah on the grounds (1) that the free use of earlier Psalms is entirely in his style; (2) that *vv.* 5, 6 refer to his call (Jer. i. 5) and *v.* 21 to the dignity of his office, and that the general situation of the Psalmist corresponds to that of the persecuted prophet; (3) that his authorship would account for the use of this Psalm by the Rechabites, with whom he had been brought into such close connexion (Jer. xxxv). If it was composed by Jeremiah, it must have been in the latest period of his life, when he had been carried down into Egypt after the Fall of Jerusalem; when the stress and strain of his life was over, and yet he was by no means free from hostility and danger (Jer. xliv). But the grounds for attributing it to him are quite inconclusive.

One thought grows out of another, and there is no marked division into stanzas: but in the first half of the Psalm (1—13) prayer, in the second half (14—24) praise, predominates.

71 In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust:
Let me never be put to confusion.
2 Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape:
Incline thine ear unto me, and save me.

1—3. The prayer of faith in the midst of danger. These verses are taken, with but little change, from xxxi. 1—3.

1. *In thee.. do I put my trust*] Better, In thee...have I taken refuge. See note on lvii. 1, and cp. vii. 1; xi. 1; xvi. 1; xxv. 20.

let me never be put to confusion] Let me never be ashamed. He has put himself under Jehovah's protection: may he never be disappointed and disgraced by finding that his trust is vain. Cp. xxxi. 17; xxv. 2, 20; xxii. 5; Phil. i. 20. It will be remembered that the verse forms the close of the *Te Deum*.

2. *Deliver me* &c.] In thy righteousness wilt thou deliver me and rescue me: an expansion of the simpler *rescue me* in xxxi. 1. *In thy righteousness* stands emphatically at the beginning of the sentence in the Heb. The righteousness of God is a thought upon which this Psalmist loves to dwell (*vv.* 2, 15, 16, 19, 24). In virtue of that unchanging rectitude which is an inalienable attribute of Deity, He cannot desert His servant. He must be true to His promise. Cp. 2 Tim. ii. 13.

incline] Or, bow down, as in xxxi. 2: i.e. 'bend a listening ear.'

save me] In xxxi. 2, *deliver me speedily*.

Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto *I* may continually 3
resort:
Thou hast given commandment to save me;
For thou *art* my rock and my fortress.

Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, 4
Out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel *man*.
For thou *art* my hope, O Lord GOD: 5
Thou art my trust from my youth.
By thee have I been holden up from the womb: 6
Thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels:
My praise *shall be* continually of thee.
I am as a wonder unto many; 7

3. *Be thou my strong habitation*] Better as R.V., Be thou to me a rock of habitation. God is called *our habitation* in xc. 1; and the phrase may be an intentional modification of the words *a rock of stronghold* in xxxi. 2. But some Heb. MSS., the LXX, Symm., and Targ., read *stronghold* here also, and the word *mā'ōn* (מָעוֹן) so closely resembles *mā'oz* (מָעוֹז) that the variation is probably due to accident.

thou hast given commandment] Cp. xliv. 4; lxviii. 28. To the three Heb. words rendered *whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment* correspond two words in xxxi. 2, meaning *for a fortress-house*. The curious similarity of the consonants in the Heb. suggests that the reading of the Massoretic Text here is a restoration of partially obliterated or faded letters: and the LXX translators, though they give a different rendering, appear to have found the same reading here as in xxxi. 2, or a closely similar one. The other Versions agree with the Massoretic Text.

my rock] My cliff: a different word from that in the first line, recalling the 'cliff' (*sela*) where David had been so unexpectedly delivered from Saul (1 Sam. xxiii. 25 ff.). On the metaphors see note on xviii. 2.

4—8. The ground of the Psalmist's appeal for deliverance.

4. *Deliver me*] R.V., rescue me, as in *v.* 2.

the unrighteous and cruel man] Comp. the complaints in Habakkuk (i. 2—4) and Jeremiah (vi. 7; &c.) of the prevailing injustice and violence. The singular is probably collective.

5, 6. A free imitation of xxii. 9, 10.

my hope...my trust] Cp. Jer. xiv. 8; xvii. 7, 13; and "Christ Jesus our hope" (1 Tim. i. 1).

By thee &c.] Better (cp. Is. xlviii. 2), On thee have I stayed myself from (my) birth. The same word is used in iii. 5; li. 12.

thou art he that took me] A different word from that similarly translated in xxii. 9, and of doubtful meaning. The rendering, *Thou hast been my benefactor from my mother's womb* (cp. R.V. marg.), suits the parallelism well. But cp. Jer. i. 5.

7. *I am* &c.] Or, I have been as a wonder. Many of those who saw

But thou *art* my strong refuge.
8 Let my mouth be filled *with* thy praise
And with thy honour all the day.
9 Cast me not off in the time of old age;
Forsake me not when my strength faileth.
10 For mine enemies speak against me;
And they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together,
11 Saying, God hath forsaken him:
Persecute and take him; for *there is* none to deliver *him*.
12 O God, be not far from me:
O my God, make haste for my help.
13 Let them be confounded *and* consumed that are adversaries to my soul;

my sufferings regarded me as a typical example of divine chastisement, but my faith has remained unshaken throughout. Cp. Is. lii. 14; and Deut. xxviii. 46, where the punishment of Israel for its sins is spoken of as "a sign and a wonder." In a somewhat different sense Ezekiel was a 'wonder' to his contemporaries (xii. 6, 11; xxiv. 24, 27). The explanation 'I have been a sign and example of God's protecting care' is less natural. 'Monster' in P.B.V. is an archaism for 'portent,' or, 'prodigy,' from Lat. *monstrum*.

my strong refuge] Cp. *v.* 1, and Jer. xvii. 17, R.V.

8. My mouth shall be filled with thy praise,
And with thy honour all the day (R.V.).

Cp. 1 Chr. xxix. 11, "Thine, O Jehovah, is the greatness, and the might, and the *honour*, and the victory, and the majesty." The P.B.V. *that I may sing of thy glory and honour all the day long* comes from the LXX through the Vulg.

9—13. Repeated deprecations and prayers.

9. *Cast me not off*] Or, *cast me not away*, from Thy presence (li. 11), though for the time the nation as a whole is so cast out (Deut. xxix. 28; Jer. vii. 15).

10. *against me*] R.V. **concerning me.** Cp. iii. 2; xli. 5. What they say follows in *v.* 11.

they that lay wait for my soul] Or, **they that watch for my life.**

11. *God hath forsaken him*] Cp. xxii. 1; xxxviii. 21 *b*.

persecute] R.V. **pursue.** But cp. lxix. 26; Jer. xv. 15; xvii. 18; xx. 11.

12, 13. Reminiscences of xxxv. 22 *b*; xl. 13 *b*, 14 (lxx. 1 *b*, 2): cp. xxii. 11 *a*; xxxviii. 21, 22; xxxv. 4, 26; cix. 29.

make haste for my help] R.V. **make haste to help me.**

let them be confounded] R.V. as in *v.* 1, **let them be ashamed.**

consumed] Some editors would read *dishonoured* as in xl. 14, with some MSS. and the Syr. The Hebrew words differ in one letter only. But the LXX and Jer. support the M.T., for which cp. xxxvii. 20.

Let them be covered *with* reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt.
But I will hope continually,
And will yet praise thee more and more.
My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness
And thy salvation all the day;
For I know not the numbers *thereof.*
I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD:
I will make mention of thy righteousness, *even* of thine only.
O God, thou hast taught me from my youth:
And hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.
Now also when I am old and gray headed,

14—16. Vows of praise and thanksgiving.

14. **But as for me, I will hope continually,**
And will praise thee yet more and more.

He contrasts his own future with that of his enemies.

15. **My mouth shall tell of thy righteousness,**
And of thy salvation all the day;
For I know not the tale thereof.

Salvation is coupled with righteousness, because the one is the outcome and visible manifestation of the other. Cp. *v.* 2; Is. xlv. 21. There is a play in the Heb. on the words *tell* and *tale.* They are derived from the same root, which, like *tell* in old English, means both to *count* and to *recount*. God's mercies are an inexhaustible theme. Cp. xl. 5; cxxxix. 17, 18.

16. *I will go* &c.] Better, **I will come with the mighty acts of the Lord Jehovah**, bringing them as my theme for praise. Cp. cvi. 2. The A.V. would at any rate require the singular, which is however read by the LXX and some other Versions.

17—20. Past mercies are the ground of hope alike for the Psalmist and for the nation.

17. *thou hast taught me* &c.] He has been a life-long disciple in the school of God. Cp. Is. viii. 16; l. 4; liv. 13.

have I declared] Have I been declaring, habitually and constantly.

thy wondrous works] A special term for the singular and conspicuous works of God, both in nature (Job v. 9), and in His dealings with His people (Ex. iii. 20), particularly in the great crises of their history (lxxviii. 4, 11, 32), which declare His power and love, and arouse the admiration of all who behold them. The word includes 'miracles' commonly so called, as one limited class of 'the wonderful works of God,' but is of much wider application. To recount and celebrate His marvellous works is the duty and delight of God's saints. Cp. ix. 1; xxvi. 7; xl. 5.

18. *Now also when I am old and grayheaded*] Better, **And even**

O God, forsake me not;
Until I have shewed thy strength unto *this* generation,
And thy power to every one *that* is to come.
19 Thy righteousness also, O God, *is* very high,
Who hast done great *things:*
O God, who *is* like unto thee!
20 *Thou*, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles,
Shalt quicken me again,
And shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

when I am old and grayheaded: lit. *and even unto old age and gray hairs.* Cp. 1 Sam. xii. 2; Is. xlvi. 4.

until &c.] Better with R.V.,

Until I have declared thy strength unto the next generation,
Thy might unto every one that is to come.

Thy strength, lit., *thine arm*, implies more than power; it suggests "thoughts of guidance, support, protection, government, chastisement, conflict, victory." (Kay). Cp. lxxvii. 15; Is. liii. 1; &c. It is more natural to supply *the next* (R.V.) than *this* with *generation*. But *generation* needs some qualification; and the Syr. (with which the LXX nearly agrees) may be right in reading, *until I have declared thy strength, and thy might to the generation to come.* Cp. xxii. 30, 31, and the note there.

19. is *very high*] Lit., (reacheth) **unto the height**, of heaven. Cp. xxxvi. 5; lvii. 10; Job xi. 8.

who hast done &c.] It is better with R.V. to connect this clause with what follows: **Thou who hast done great things, O God, who is like unto thee?** Jehovah is incomparable for power and goodness. The fundamental passage is Ex. xv. 11; cp. Ps. xxxv. 10; lxxxvi. 8; lxxxix. 6, 8; Mic. vii. 18.

20. **Thou which hast shewed us many and sore troubles,**
Shalt quicken us again,
And shalt bring us up again from the depths of the earth.

So R.V., with marg. note, 'Another reading is, *me*.' The *Kthibh* or written text (p. lxvii) has *us*; but the *Qrē*, or accepted reading of the Jewish textual tradition, is *me*. The latter reading is supported in the first line by all the Versions except Aquila: in the second and third lines the LXX and Syr. read *me*, Targ. and Jer. *us*. The plural, whether it is the original reading or not, points to the correct interpretation. The Psalmist's hopes are not merely personal; he speaks on behalf of the nation whose representative he is; he looks for its restoration from its present state of humiliation. It is as it were dead and sunk in the depths of Sheol, but God can and will recall it to life. Cp. Hos. vi. 1, 2; Ezek. xxxvii. 12 ff.; Ps. lxxx. 18: lxxxv. 6. *Again* hardly expresses the full meaning: lit. *thou wilt turn*, or, *return* (*and*) *quicken us*. Cp. vi. 4; lxxx. 14; lxxxv. 4; Is. lxiii. 17.

the depths of the earth] The 'depths' denote (1) the vast masses of water stored away in the earth (xxxiii. 7), and hence (2) the subterranean

Thou shalt increase my greatness,
And comfort me on every side.
I will also praise thee with the psaltery,
Even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing
With the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel.
My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee;
And my soul, which thou hast redeemed.
My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long:
For they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.

abysses where Sheol was supposed to be situated. Cp. "the lower parts of the earth" (lxiii. 9), and Job xxvi. 5, 6.

21—24. Repeated prayers and vows of thanksgiving.

21. **O mayest thou increase my greatness,**
And turn again and comfort me.

Except in the Book of Esther the word for *greatness* is used of God's greatness or great deeds (cxlv. 3, 6); and the LXX reads *thy righteousness*, or, according to some MSS. and the Vulg., *thy greatness*. This may be right; but if the text is correct, the Psalmist thinks of himself as sharing in the honour of the resuscitated nation. He can hardly refer to personal dignity only. For *comfort* cp. Is. xii. 1; xl. 1. The past tenses of the P.B.V. in this and the preceding verse are due to the influence of the Vulg.

22. *I will also* &c.] **I also will give thanks unto thee**: in response to this new proof of Thy love. *psaltery*] See on lvii. 8.

thy truth] For in this manifestation of mercy to Israel God has shewn Himself *true* to His promises. Cp. Mic. vii. 20.

unto thee &c.] **Unto thee will I make melody.**

O thou Holy One of Israel] A title which is found frequently in the Book of Isaiah, but elsewhere only twice again in the Psalter (lxxviii. 41; lxxxix. 18), twice in the Book of Jeremiah (l. 29; li. 5), and once in a modified form in Ezekiel (xxxix. 7). Cp. too Hos. xi. 9; Hab. i. 12. Its use here in connexion with the redemption of Israel is significant. It denotes that God in His character of a Holy God has entered into covenant with Israel, and His holiness is pledged to redeem His people. For a fuller explanation of this title the present writer may be allowed to refer to his *Doctrine of the Prophets*, pp. 177 ff.

23. **My lips shall sing aloud when I make melody unto thee.** P.B.V. 'my lips shall be *fain*,' i.e. *glad*: Vulg. *exultabunt*.

my soul] His whole self and personality, delivered from danger, will join in the glad thanksgiving. Cp. xxxiv. 22; lv. 18.

24. *My tongue* &c.] From xxxv. 28. The word for *talk* denotes musing, meditative speech.

for they &c.] **For they are ashamed, for they are confounded, that**

seek my hurt (R.V.). A reminiscence of xxxv. 4, 26; cf. 14 (lxx. 2). His faith realises the discomfiture of his enemies as though it had already taken place.

PSALM LXXII.

The preceding Psalm dwells much upon the righteousness of God: this Psalm depicts the blessings which will flow from the righteousness of His earthly representative, the theocratic king. In Psalm after Psalm in this book we have heard the cry of the oppressed: here is unfolded to our view the splendid vision of a perfect ruler who shall be the champion of the oppressed, whose glory will be, "redressing human wrong."

i. The Psalm begins with a prayer that God will endow the king with the knowledge of His laws and with the spirit of His righteousness. Thus equipped he will fulfil the ideal of his office, as the just ruler who protects the oppressed, and secures for his people the blessings of peace and plenty (1—7).

ii. Thus far the Psalmist has dealt with the relation of the king to his own people. Now, taking a wider sweep, he prays that he may have a world-wide dominion, and that the wealthiest and most distant nations may bring him tribute, won by the moral supremacy of his beneficent rule to offer him their voluntary homage (8—14).

iii. The Psalm concludes with prayers for the welfare of the king himself, for the prosperity of his people, and for the undying perpetuation of his memory as the benefactor of the nations, in whom the promise made to the seed of Abraham finds its fulfilment (15—17).

In rendering the title 'A Psalm *for Solomon*,' the A.V. follows the LXX (εἰς Σαλωμών) in regarding Solomon as the subject of the Psalm. Similarly the Syriac Version entitles it, 'A Psalm of David, when he had made Solomon king, and a prophecy concerning the Advent of the Messiah and the calling of the Gentiles.' But this explanation is untenable. The analogy of the other Psalm-titles points to the rendering of A.V. marg. and R.V., supported by all the other Ancient Versions, 'A Psalm *of Solomon*.' It seems then to have been regarded as having been composed by Solomon as an intercession to be used by the people on his behalf. Nor is this an impossible view of its origin and purpose. If the "last words" of David, uttered in the spirit of prophecy shortly before his death, describe the blessings which would flow from the rule of a righteous king, animated by the spirit of justice and guided by the fear of God, and anticipate the rise of such a righteous king out of his house in virtue of the eternal covenant which God has made with him, why should not the first words of Solomon be a prayer that these great hopes should be realised in himself by the world-wide extension and eternal duration of a kingdom founded in righteousness?

Many of the arguments urged against the Solomonic date are of little real weight. (1) It is said that in *v.* 2 the whole people is spoken of as 'afflicted,' and that *vv.* 12—14 "read like the hope of one who had seen the nation sunk in distress." But the reference is not to the nation as a whole, but to the poor and weak within it who were always liable

to be hardly treated by the rich and powerful. (2) *V.* 8 is said to be a quotation from Zech. ix. 10; and *v.* 12 from Job xxix. 12. It is however by no means clear that the Psalmist is the borrower. (3) The clear and flowing style is thought to be the mark of a later age. Delitzsch on the contrary finds in the somewhat artificial style a mark of the Solomonic period, and the argument is not one which can be pressed.

On the whole however the Psalm seems rather to reflect the memories of Solomon's imperial greatness than to anticipate it. For what later king it was written must remain uncertain. It may have been for Hezekiah, who came to the throne at a time when grave social evils called for reform, and when the hope of the advent of the ideal king in the near future animated the minds of the prophets. It is even possible that the Psalm does not refer to any particular king, but is a prayer for the establishment of the Messianic kingdom under a prince of David's line according to prophecy, the lyrical counterpart in fact of Zech. ix. 9 ff. At the same time it does appear to have a definite historical background, and to be a prayer for a king who is actually on the throne. The prayer in the Psalms of Solomon for the advent of the Messianic king (*Introd.* p. xlix) has an altogether different tone.

The hypothesis of Hitzig and others, approved by Cheyne, that it refers to some non-Israelite king, such as Ptolemy Philadelphus (B.C. 285), may safely be rejected. It is not conceivable that a poet of real patriotism, not to say of inspiration in the higher sense of the word, should have so grovelled to a heathen monarch as to apply to him the sacred language of Messianic hope, and to connect his name with the solemn promises to the seed of Abraham and the house of David.

But if the primary reference of the Psalm is to some actual king of Judah, it is plain that it reaches far beyond him. It is a 'Messianic' Psalm. It presents a picture of the kingdom of God upon earth in its ideal character of perfection and universality. It is thus in its nature not only a prayer and a hope but a prophecy. As each successive king of David's line failed to realise the ideal, it became clearer and clearer that its words pointed forward to One who was to come, to the true "Prince of Peace." Hence the Targum interprets it of the Messiah. It paraphrases *v.* 1 thus:

> "O God, give the precepts of Thy judgement to King Messiah,
> And Thy righteousness to the son of king David:"

and it interprets *v.* 17 of the pre-existence of His name:

> "His name shall be remembered for ever;
> And before the sun existed was His name prepared;
> And all peoples shall be blessed in His merits."

According to the Talmud and Midrash, **Yinnōn**—the word in *v.* 17 which is rendered *shall be continued* or *shall have issue*—is one of the eight names of the Messiah. "His Name," so the Rabbis mystically interpreted the passage, "is Yinnon. Why is He called Yinnon? Because He will make those who sleep in the dust to flourish": i.e. He will raise the dead.

Following the example of Jewish exegesis, the Christian Church has rightly understood the Psalm to refer to Christ. Yet it is never quoted

in the N.T. Possibly the regal aspect of the Messiah was so dominant in the first age (Acts i. 6) that it needed to be kept in the background, until men had learnt that His kingdom was "not of this world," but a spiritual kingdom.

It was fitly chosen by the Early Church as the special Psalm for the Epiphany, foretelling as it does the homage of the nations to the Messiah, of which the visit of the Wise Men was the earnest.

It was a favourite Psalm of St Edmund, the martyr king of East Anglia, who spent a year in retirement that he might learn the Psalter by heart, so as to be able to repeat it in his intervals of leisure. Its kingly ideal seems to have moulded his life.

A Psalm for Solomon.

72 Give the king thy judgments, O God,
And thy righteousness unto the king's son.
2 He shall judge thy people with righteousness,
And thy poor with judgment.

1—7. A prayer that God will confer upon the king the gifts which he needs for the right exercise of his office. Then righteousness will bear the fruit of peace; redress and repression of wrong will promote the fear of God; under his beneficent rule the righteous will flourish.

1. God is the source of all judgement (Deut. i. 17); the king is His representative for administering it. May God therefore grant him such a knowledge of the divine laws and ordinances by which he is to govern Israel, and endow him with such a divine spirit of justice, as may make him a worthy ruler. Just judgement is the constant characteristic of the ideal king (Is. xi. 3 ff.; xvi. 5; xxviii. 6; xxxii. 1). The words of this verse and the next are the echo of God's offer to Solomon, "Ask what I shall *give* thee:" and of Solomon's answer, "Give thy servant an understanding heart *to judge thy people*;" and a prayer for the effectual realisation of the promise, "Lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart." (1 Kings iii. 5 ff.).

the king...the king's son] Not, to the king and his heir, for the Psalm speaks of but one ruler; but, to a king who is a king's son, the legitimate successor to the throne.

2. He shall give sentence to thy people with righteousness,
And to thine afflicted ones with judgement.

Many commentators render the verbs throughout the Ps. as optatives, *Let him give sentence*, and so forth. In *vv.* 8 ff. this rendering is required by the form of the verb; but here the form is a simple future. The administration of the king endowed with divine capacities for ruling is described (*vv.* 2, 4, 6), together with the resultant blessings (3, 5, 7). The rendering *give sentence* is adopted to indicate that the Heb. word is different from that in *v.* 4.

It has been argued that 'thine afflicted ones' implies that the nation was at the time in a state of depression and humiliation: but the term

The mountains shall bring peace to the people, 3
And the little hills, by righteousness.
He shall judge the poor of the people, 4
He shall save the children of the needy,
And shall break in pieces the oppressor.
They shall fear thee as long as the sun 5
And moon endure, throughout all generations.

is not necessarily coextensive with 'thy people'; it denotes, as frequently in the prophets, the poorer classes, who especially needed the protection of good government. See Is. iii. 14, 15; x. 2; Jer. xxii. 16; Am. viii. 4.

3. Logically this verse forms but one sentence, and the exact reproduction of the Heb. division into two clauses for the sake of rhythm has an awkward effect. The sense is, **By righteousness shall the mountains and the hills bear peace for the people.** The mountains and the hills, which are the characteristic features of Palestine, represent poetically the whole land, which, under a just government, will bear the fruit of peace and general welfare for its inhabitants. Similarly Isaiah describes peace as the result of righteousness (xxxii. 17); and peace was the distinguishing characteristic of Solomon's reign (1 Chron. xxii. 9), as well as of its antitype the Messianic age (Is. ii. 4; ix. 6, 7; Zech. ix. 10).

4. An expansion of *v.* 2. The oppressed and defenceless are the special care of the true king, "whose glory is, redressing human wrong." He does justice to 'the afflicted of the people'; he is the preserver of 'the children of the needy,' words which are best understood literally, not merely of those born poor, or as a periphrasis, according to a common idiom, for 'the needy,' but of children, especially orphans, at once innocent and helpless, and therefore calling for special protection (see Is. x. 2; Mic. ii. 9, for the dangers to which they were exposed): while he crushes the merciless oppressor, treating him as he had treated his victims (xciv. 5; Prov. xxii. 22, 23; Is. iii. 15; James ii. 13).

5. **They shall fear thee while the sun endureth,**
And so long as the moon doth shine, throughout all generations.

Who is addressed? Not the king, who is spoken of throughout in the third person, but God. The just administration of the king will promote reverence for God, Whose representative he is (cp. 1 Kings viii. 40; Matt. v. 16), so long as the established course of nature lasts. For the order of nature as an emblem of permanence cp. Jer. xxxi. 35 ff.; xxxiii. 20 ff.

The LXX however represents a different reading: *He shall endure as long as the sun*, &c.: a reference to the promise of eternal dominion to the house of David, as in *v.* 17: cp. lxxxix. 4, 29, 36, 37; xxi. 4. The word presumed by the LXX (יאריך) closely resembles that in the Massoretic Text (יראוך), so far as the consonants are concerned, and it may have been the original reading: still, the text gives a good sense.

6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass:
As showers that water the earth.
7 In his days shall the righteous flourish;
And abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.
8 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,
And from the river unto the ends of the earth.

6. *He shall come down* &c.] A condensed comparison, for, 'he shall be like rain coming down.' The simile may have been suggested by the 'last words of David,' 2 Sam. xxiii. 4: cp. Prov. xvi. 15; Hos. vi. 3; Micah v. 7.

the mown grass] The meadow which has been mown, and which needs rain to start the aftermath (Am. vii. 1). The P.B.V. *into a fleece of wool* is an amplification of the rendering of LXX, Vulg., Symm., Jer., *upon a fleece*. The Heb. word means a *shorn* fleece or a *mown* meadow; probably the Ancient Versions meant *fleece* metaphorically of the meadow: Coverdale's paraphrase *a fleece of wool* may have been prompted by the recollection of the dew on Gideon's fleece.

7. *flourish*] The metaphor follows naturally upon that of the preceding verse. Cp. Prov. xi. 28; Ps. xcii. 12, 13. For *the righteous* LXX, Jer., Syr. read *righteousness*, which suits the parallelism better.

so long as the moon endureth] Lit. as R.V., **till the moon be no more**; for all time. Cp. Job xiv. 12.

8—14. May all nations submit to this best of rulers, recognising the paramount claim of moral supremacy.

8. *He shall have dominion also*] Render, **And may he have dominion.** The form of the verb here is decisive in favour of rendering as a wish or prayer, and governs the meaning of the verbs in *vv.* 9—11, which should all be similarly rendered.

from sea to sea &c.] The words are a poetical generalisation of the promise to Israel in Ex. xxiii. 31, "I will set thy border from the Red Sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness unto the River"; and of the language in which Solomon's empire is described, 1 Kings iv. 21, 24 (where note the use of the same word *to have dominion*). If any definite seas are intended, they would be the Mediterranean on the West, and the Red Sea or the Indian Ocean on the East; but more probably the phrase is quite general, meaning, 'as far as the land extends' (Am. viii. 12; Mic. vii. 12). *The River* (rightly spelt in R.V. with a capital, as denoting the River *par excellence*) is the Euphrates: *the ends of the earth* (the same words as *the uttermost parts of the earth* in ii. 8) are the remotest parts of the known world. Extension, not limit, is the idea conveyed. The world belongs to God: may He confer upon His representative a world-wide dominion! a hope to be realised only in the universal kingdom of Christ. Almost the same words recur in Zech. ix. 10, and the son of Sirach combines them with the promise to Abraham in Ecclus. xliv. 21.

They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; 9
And his enemies shall lick the dust.
The kings of Tarshish and *of* the isles shall bring presents: 10
The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.
Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: 11
All nations shall serve him.
For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; 12
The poor also, and *him* that hath no helper.

9. Let them that dwell in the wilderness bow down before him, And let his enemies lick the dust.

Even the wild Bedouin tribes that roam at large through the desert, the freest of the free, submit to his rule. LXX, Aq., Symm., Jer., render, *Ethiopians*, the Targ., *Africans*; but the term is quite general. There is no need to alter the text. Cp. lxxiv. 14.

lick the dust] I.e. prostrate themselves with their faces on the ground in abject submission. Cp. Mic. vii. 17; Is. xlix. 23.

10. Let the kings...bring presents, or, as R.V. marg., **render tribute**, the word implying that they are rendering what is *due* to him. *Tarshish* was the wealthy Phœnician colony of Tartessus in southern Spain: *the isles* or rather *the coastlands* are those of the Mediterranean generally. *Sheba* was south-eastern Arabia (Arabia Felix), famous for its wealth and commerce; hence P.B.V., following LXX and Vulg., gives *Arabia: Seba*, mentioned in Gen. x. 7 among Cushite peoples and coupled with Egypt and Ethiopia in Is. xliii. 3, xlv. 14, is generally supposed to be the kingdom of Meroe in Ethiopia, but may denote a Cushite state on the Arabian Gulf. The most remote and the most wealthy nations unite in honouring the righteous king.

11. Yea, let all kings fall down before him, Let all nations serve him.

The allusions to Solomon's empire in this and the preceding verse are obvious. "All kingdoms brought presents and served Solomon."... "All the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom,...and they brought every man his present." His alliance with Phœnicia brought him into connexion with the West; he had extensive commerce both by sea and land with the East and South; his fame brought the queen of Sheba to visit him in person. See 1 Kings iv. 21, 34; x. 1 ff., 11, 15, 22, 25, 28, 29.

12. *For he shall deliver*] His claim to this universal homage rests not on the strength of his armies but on the justice and mercifulness of his rule. Cp. Is. xvi. 4, 5. The true victory of the kingdom of God is a moral victory. *v.* 9, it is true, refers to the forced submission of his enemies; but the same inconsistency is found in Zech. ix. 9 ff.: it was only by slow degrees that the triumph of the kingdom of God came to be completely dissociated from the idea of material conquest, and was realised to be entirely a moral triumph.

the poor also &c.] **And the afflicted, when he hath no helper.** The verse closely resembles Job xxix. 12.

13 He shall spare the poor and needy,
And shall save the souls of the needy.
14 He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence:
And precious shall their blood be in his sight.
15 And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba:
Prayer also shall be made for him continually;
And daily shall he be praised.
16 There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains;

13. He shall have pity on the weak and needy,
And the souls of the needy shall he save.

The weak may include the sick as well as the poor. Cp. xl. 1; lxxxii. 3, 4; Is. x. 2, xi. 4; Am. iv. 1. *Souls* primarily = lives, and so in *v.* 14.

14. *deceit*] **Oppression** (R.V.) or **fraud** (R.V. marg.). The word occurs elsewhere only in x. 7; lv. 11.

and precious &c.] He will not suffer it to be shed with impunity. Cp. for the phrase cxvi. 15; 1 Sam. xxvi. 21; 2 Kings i. 13, 14; and see Ps. ix. 12. P.B.V. *dear* means 'costly' or 'precious.'

15—17. A concluding triplet of prayers, for the welfare of the king (*v.* 15), for the prosperity of his people (*v.* 16), for the perpetuation of his memory (*v.* 17).

15. The connexion and meaning are uncertain. The R.V. connects the verse with *v.* 14, placing a colon at the end of *v.* 14 and rendering, **and they shall live**: lit., as marg., *he*, namely, each one of the afflicted ones. The literal rendering of the next clause is, *and he* (or, *one*) *shall give him*, which is understood to mean either that the poor man will grow rich and give presents to the king in gratitude for his deliverance, or that the king will not only protect the life of the poor man, but give him a rich largess in addition. Neither of these explanations is satisfactory. It is better to separate *v.* 15 from *v.* 14, and regard *vv.* 15—17 as a concluding series of wishes or prayers for the king and his kingdom.

So may he live, and may men give him of the gold of Sheba:
And may they pray for him continually, and bless him all day long.

May he live is an echo of the regular acclamation 'Vivat Rex,' 'Vive le Roi,' which we render *God save the king*. See 1 Sam. x. 24; 2 Sam. xvi. 16; 1 Kings i. 25, 34, 39. May the people not only greet him with the customary acclamation and offer him the choicest gifts, but pray for his welfare and bless him as the source of their happiness and prosperity. Cp. 1 Kings viii. 66. The P.B.V. 'prayer shall be made ever *unto him*' is untenable as a rendering of the Heb. It was doubtless suggested by the view that the subject of the Psalm is the divine Messiah.

The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon:
And *they* of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.
His name shall endure for ever:
His name shall be continued as long as the sun:
And *men* shall be blessed in him:
All nations shall call him blessed.

Blessed *be* the LORD God, the God of Israel,
Who only doeth wondrous *things*.

16. May there be abundance of corn in the land upon the top of the mountains:
May the fruit thereof rustle like Lebanon;
And may men flourish out of the city like grass of the earth.

A prayer for the fertility of the land, and the prosperity of the people. The poet would see the cornfields stretching up to the very top of the hills, and hear the wind rustling through the ears of corn as through the cedars of Lebanon, a name in itself full of associations of beauty and fertility (Hos. xiv. 5 ff.). It is doubtful whether the verb means to *wave*, as A.V. *shake*, or to *rustle*. *Grass* is emblematic of freshness, beauty, abundant and vigorous growth. Cp. Job v. 25; Is. xxvii. 6. The increase of the population was a marked feature of Solomon's reign (1 Kings iv. 20), and is a common characteristic in the pictures of the Messianic age (Is. xlix. 20 ff.).

17. May his name endure for ever;
As long as the sun doth shine may his name have issue:
May all nations bless themselves in him, (and) call him happy.

The Psalmist prays that the king's name may not perish like the name of the wicked (Job xviii. 19), but may always *have issue*, be perpetuated in his posterity as long as time lasts (cp. *v.* 5). The Ancient Versions however (LXX, Syr., Targ., Jer.) point to the reading YIKKŌN, *shall be established*, instead of YINNŌN, *shall have issue*, a word which is found nowhere else. Cp. lxxxix. 37; 1 Kings ii. 12, 45. The LXX reads, "All the families of the earth shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him happy." But each of these last three verses is a tristich, and the words "all families of the earth" are introduced from Gen. xii. 3. *May all nations bless themselves in him*, invoking for themselves the blessings which he enjoys as the highest and best which they can imagine (cp. Gen. xlviii. 20);—an allusion to the promises to Abraham and Isaac (Gen. xxii. 18; xxvi. 4).

18, 19. This doxology is no part of the Psalm, but marks the close of Book ii. It is fuller than the corresponding doxology at the end of Book i (xli. 13), and those at the end of Books iii (lxxxix. 52) and iv (cvi. 48).

18. *who only doeth wondrous* things] Cp. lxxxvi. 10; cxxxvi. 4; Job ix. 10; and note on lxxi. 17.

19 And blessed *be* his glorious name for ever:
And let the whole earth be filled *with* his glory; Amen, and
Amen.

20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

19. *his glorious name*] Lit. *the name of his glory*, as in Neh. ix. 5. Cp. the similar phrase in 1 Chr. xxix. 13; Is. lxiii. 14. The Name of His glory is the compendious expression for the Majesty of His being, as it is revealed to men.

and let the whole earth &c.] From Num. xiv. 21.

Amen, and Amen] So it is: the response of the congregation, affirming the ascription of praise on their own behalf (cvi. 48; Neh. viii. 6).

20. Compare the note in Job xxxi. 40 which separates the speeches of Job from those of Elihu and Jehovah. As the Fourth and Fifth Books contain Psalms ascribed to David, this note cannot have been placed here by an editor who had the whole Psalter before him. Most probably it was added by the compiler of the Elohistic collection, to separate the 'Psalms of David' from the 'Psalms of Asaph' which follow, and to indicate that there were no more 'Davidic' Psalms in his collection. The only Psalm in Book iii which bears the name of David (lxxxvii) is outside the Elohistic collection, and is moreover obviously a late compilation, composed of fragments of other Psalms. For the term *prayers* see *Introd.* p. xx. The LXX rendering ὕμνοι however may point to another reading תהלות, *praises*.

THE PSALMS.

BOOK III.

PSALMS LXXIII—LXXXIX.

THE THIRD BOOK OF PSALMS.

TWELVE Psalms in the Psalter are entitled Psalms "of Asaph," of which one (Ps. l) stands by itself between the Korahite and Davidic groups in Book ii, and the remainder stand together in a group at the beginning of Book iii. It has been conjectured (see *Introd.* p. liv, note 1) that the isolated position of Ps. l is due to a transposition of the divisions of Books ii and iii, and that the original arrangement was (i) Davidic Psalms, 51—72; (ii) Levitical Psalms, (1) of the sons of Korah, 42—49; (2) of Asaph, 50, 73—83. But it is at least as probable that Ps. l owes its position to its connexion with Ps. xlix on the one hand and Ps. li on the other, and was intentionally placed by the compiler between the Psalms which he took from the Korahite collection and those which he took from the Davidic collection.

Asaph was one of David's three chief musicians. Along with Heman and Ethan (who seems to have been also called Jeduthun, see p. 348, and Intr. to Ps. lxxxviii) he was selected by the Levites to lead the music when David brought up the Ark to Jerusalem (1 Chron. xv. 16—19). He was appointed by David to preside over the services of praise and thanksgiving in the Tent where the Ark was placed (1 Chron. xvi. 4, 5, 7, 37), while Heman and Jeduthun ministered in the Tabernacle at Gibeon (xvi. 41, 42). His sons, under his superintendence, were leaders of four of the twenty-four courses of musicians (xxv. 1 ff.), and they are mentioned as taking part in the Dedication of the Temple (2 Chron. v. 12). In later times Asaph was ranked with David as the author of sacred songs, and along with Heman and Jeduthun, he bore the title of "the king's seer" (2 Chr. xxix. 30; 1 Chr. xxv. 5; 2 Chr. xxxv. 15).

The "sons of Asaph," that is, the Levitical family or guild of his descendants, are further mentioned in the reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xx. 14), in connexion with Hezekiah's reformation (xxix. 13), and as taking part in the Passover celebrated by Josiah (xxxv. 15). Among the exiles who returned with Zerubbabel were "the singers, the sons of Asaph," in number 128 (Ezra ii. 41), or (according to Neh. vii. 44) 148,

and they conducted the service of praise and thanksgiving when the foundation of the Temple was laid (Ezra iii. 10). In the time of Nehemiah they are once more mentioned as holding the same office (Neh. xi. 22).

It is clear that all the Psalms which bear the name of Asaph cannot have been written by David's musician, if indeed any of them were, for some unquestionably belong to the time of the Exile or even a later period. Probably the title does no more than indicate that they were taken by the compiler of the Elohistic Psalter from a collection of Psalms preserved and used in the family or guild of Asaph, and bearing his name. Why one Levitical hymn-book should have been named from *the sons of Korah*, and the other from *Asaph* rather than *the sons of Asaph* can only be conjectured. Possibly tradition connected the name of Asaph himself more closely with it as the founder of the collection or the author of some of the Psalms in it, but it must have remained open to additions in successive periods.

The Psalms of Asaph are marked by distinctive characteristics. How is this to be accounted for, if they belong, as seems certainly to be the case, to widely different periods? It may best be explained by the supposition that a certain type or style of composition, derived possibly from Asaph himself, was traditional in the family of Asaph, rather than by the supposition that they were selected on account of their particular characteristics.

Broadly speaking, these Psalms are distinguished by their *prophetic* character. The theme of Ps. l, which is a typical Psalm of Asaph, conspicuous for its vigour and originality, is the message reiterated by the prophets from Samuel onward, that merely formal sacrifices are worthless in the sight of God; and the following features occur with sufficient frequency to be regarded as characteristic of the collection[1].

[1] Stähelin, who is followed by Bishop Perowne, reckons among the characteristics of these Psalms the interchange of the Divine names Jehovah and Elōhīm, and observes that Jehovah generally occurs towards the end of a Psalm where it passes into supplication. But if the predominant use of Elōhīm in the Elohistic collection is due to the hand of an editor (*Introd.* p. lvi), the interchange cannot be set

(1) Like the prophets, they represent God as *the Judge*. Ps. l describes Him as coming to judge His people, demanding spiritual service, and rebuking unbelief. Pss. lxxv, lxxvi celebrate a signal judgement upon some blasphemous and insolent enemy of His people, probably Sennacherib. Ps. lxxxii represents Him as the Judge of judges, calling them to account for malversation of their office. And though God is not expressly called the Judge in Pss. lxxiii, lxxviii, lxxxi, the judgements of God as exhibited in life and history for encouragement and warning form the subject of these Psalms. Of course the representation of God as the Judge is not confined to these Psalms, but it is so prominent in them as to constitute a distinctive feature.

(2) As in the prophets, God Himself is frequently introduced as the speaker, and that not merely by the way, but in solemn, judicial utterances. See l, lxxv, lxxxi, lxxxii. Comp. Ps. lx. 6 ff. in the Davidic group.

(3) The didactic use of history is also a prophetical feature, for it was the function of prophecy not only to foretell the future, but to interpret the past. It is in the Psalms of Asaph that we first meet with frequent references to the ancient history of Israel. The allusion to the legislation at Sinai in Ps. l is merely general; but in lxxiv. 12 ff., lxxvii. 10 ff., lxxx. 8 ff., lxxxi. 5 ff., lxxxiii. 9 ff., the past history of the nation is appealed to for encouragement or warning, and Ps. lxxviii is entirely devoted to the 'parable' of Israel's history from the Exodus to the Building of the Temple. Such references are not found in Book i, and are rare in Book ii (xliv. 1 ff., lxvi. 5 ff., lxviii); in the later books however they are more frequent (xcv. 8 ff., ciii. 7; cv; cvi; cxiv; cxxxii; cxxxv; cxxxvi).

(4) Another feature, springing out of the last, is the fre-

down as a peculiarity either of the Psalms of Asaph or of those of the sons of Korah.

El, 'God', and *Elyōn*, 'the Most High', occur with somewhat greater relative frequency, but the former is distributed over the whole Psalter, and the latter over the first four Books of it. In Book v it occurs only in cvii. 11. *Adōnāi*, 'Lord' (which however may often be due only to an editor or scribe, the word read in place of JHVH being actually written instead of it) occurs but six times, while in lxviii alone it occurs seven times, and in lxxxvi seven times.

quency with which the relation of Jehovah to Israel is expressed by the figure of the Shepherd and His flock. It recalls Jehovah's guidance of His people through the wilderness, and conveys the assurance that He will yet seek the lost and gather the scattered and guide them back into their own land. See lxxiv. 1; lxxvii. 20; lxxviii. 52, cp. 70—72; lxxix. 13; lxxx. 1. It may be noted that this is a favourite figure with the prophets Micah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

(5) Connected with the tendency to look back to the early history of Israel may be the use of the combinations Jacob and Joseph (lxxvii. 15), Joseph and Israel (lxxx. 1; lxxxi. 4, 5); cp. lxxviii. 67, 68. Cp. Am. v. 6, 15; vi. 6; Ob. 18; Zech. x. 6; Ezek. xxxvii. 16, 19; xlvii. 13. It seems to express the idea that the division of the nation is intolerable, and that the reunion of Israel is necessary to its full restoration. In this too the Asaphite Psalms agree with the prophets, who from the time of Amos onward predict the ultimate reunion of the nation.

The Asaphite Psalms are almost entirely *national* Psalms, of intercession, thanksgiving, warning, and instruction. The purely personal element is scarcely found among them. In the Psalms which have the most individual character (lxxiii, lxxvii) the Psalmist speaks as the representative of a class, and the circumstances which cause him perplexity are social or national, not personal.

As regards the date of the Psalms in this group, some belong to the period of the monarchy (lxxv, lxxvi); some to the Exile (lxxiv, lxxix, lxxx); and some perhaps to the post-exilic period. But the predominant impression gained from reading the collection as a whole is that of a cry out of the Exile, pleading that God will visit and restore His people. Psalms of thanksgiving for past deliverances, such as lxxv, lxxvi, lxxxi, follow Psalms of supplication, as reminders of the marvellous works wrought by God for His people in times past, and pledges that He can and will once more deliver them. That the collection contains Maccabaean Psalms appears to the present writer improbable, in spite of the general opinion to the contrary. See *Introd.*, p. xlvi, and the introduction to Ps. lxxiv.

PSALM LXXIII.

This Psalm is a touching confession of faith sorely tried but finally victorious. It falls into two equal divisions: in the first, the Psalmist relates his temptation; in the second, the conquest of his doubts.

i. He had all but lost belief in God's goodness towards the righteous (1, 2), as he gazed with envy on the prosperity and influence of the wicked, who seem to enjoy immunity from sickness and trouble, and go on unchecked in a career of pride and violence and blasphemy, seducing the mass of men to follow them in denying God's rule in the world (3—11). He was tempted to think that all his endeavours after holiness had been worse than wasted labour, for they had only brought him suffering (12—14).

ii. He felt that to proclaim such a view of life would have been an act of treachery towards his fellow-Israelites, but the more he pondered on the problem, the more cruel did it seem (15, 16), until in the Temple the truth was revealed to him, that all the pomp of the wicked is but a hollow show, doomed to sudden and irreparable destruction (17—20). To envy it was indeed irrational stupidity, when in the fellowship and guidance and favour of God he possessed the highest good of which man is capable (21—26). For desertion of God leads to death; drawing near to Him is happiness (27, 28).

The double problem of the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous weighed heavily on the minds of many in ancient Israel, who only knew of this world as the scene of God's dealings with men, and missed the clear evidence of God's sovereign justice which they desired to see in the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked. In Ps. xxxvii we have a simple exhortation to patience and faith in view of the prosperity of the wicked, for the triumph of the wicked will be short-lived, while the reward of the righteous will be sure and abiding. In Ps. xlix the impotence and the transitoriness of wealth are insisted on, and contrasted with God's care for the righteous and the final triumph of righteousness. In this Psalm the problem is still approached from the side of the prosperity of the wicked, though there is a side-glance at the sufferings of the righteous (*v.* 14). It represents a deeper and probably later stage of thought: the difficulty has become more acute, and the solution is more complete; for the Psalmist is led to recognise not only the instability of worldly greatness, but the supreme blessedness of fellowship with God as man's highest good. In the Book of Job the problem is approached from the side of the suffering of the righteous, but it is fully discussed in its manifold aspects. A further step is made towards the conclusion implicitly contained in the faith of this Psalm, that this world is but one act in the great drama of life.

Whether the Psalmist in *vv.* 24 ff. looks beyond this life or not, is a question of interpretation on which opinion will probably always be divided. But it is clear, as Delitzsch observes, that he does not rise from pointing to the retribution which awaits the wicked in this world, to anticipate a solution of the contradictions of life in the world beyond,

and the exceeding glory which infinitely outweighs the sufferings of this present time still lies beyond his horizon. But the dimmer his view of a future life, the more wonderful is the triumphant faith, which surrenders all and cleaves to God, and the pure love, which counts all in the universe as nothing in comparison of Him.

It is impossible to speak with confidence as to the date of the Psalm. It does not belong to the Exile, for the Temple was standing (v. 17). The problem was debated in pre-exilic times (Jer. xii. 1 ff.; Hab. i. 2 ff.); as well as after the Return (Ps. xxxvii. 3 ff.; Job vi. 7 ff.; Mal. iii. 13 ff.; Ecclesiastes viii. 11 ff.; &c.). The relation of the Psalm to Job (cp. especially ch. xxi) and Proverbs (xxiii. 17, 18; &c.) does not enable us to fix its date. It should be noted that here, as in Pss. xxxvii, xlix, the thoughts and language of the 'Wisdom' or religious philosophy of Israel find a place in the Psalter.

A Psalm of Asaph.

Truly God *is* good to Israel, 73
Even to such as are of a clean heart.
But *as for* me, my feet were almost gone; 2
My steps had well nigh slipt.
For I was envious at the foolish, 3
When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

1—14. Faith tried by the sight of the prosperity of the wicked.

1, 2. The Psalmist begins by stating the conclusion to which he had been led through the trial of his faith.

1. *Truly*] It is possible to render with R.V. marg., *Only good is God.* Though He permits His people to suffer, He is wholly loving-kindness toward them. Cp. Lam. iii. 25. But it is preferable to render with R.V. text, Surely. The particle *ak* in this connexion expresses the idea *Nay but after all.*

such as are of a clean heart] R.V., such as are pure in heart. 'Israel' is thus defined as the true Israel of God. To them, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, He manifests His goodness (Ex. xxxiii. 19). Purity of heart and life is the condition of admission to His presence (xxiv. 4 ff.), of 'seeing God' (Matt. v. 8).

2. But the Psalmist had almost lost his faith in God's goodness. He had as it were all but swerved from the right path (xliv. 18); all but lost his footing in the slippery places of life's journey (xvii. 5).

3—9. The cause: the unbroken prosperity of the godless. Cp. Job's indignant complaint, xxi. 7 ff.

3. *I was envious*] Cp. xxxvii. 1; and the repeated warnings of the Book of Proverbs, iii. 31, xxiii. 17, xxiv. 1, 19.

the foolish] Rather as R.V., the arrogant, a word denoting boastful blustering presumption. Cp. v. 5; lxxv. 4.

the prosperity] Lit. *the peace.* Cp. Job xxi. 9, "their houses are in peace without fear."

For *there are* no bands in their death: 4
But their strength *is* firm.
They *are* not in trouble *as other* men; 5
Neither are they plagued like *other* men.
Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; 6
Violence covereth them *as* a garment.
Their eyes stand out with fatness: 7
They have more than heart could wish.
They are corrupt, and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression: 8
They speak loftily.

4. *no bands &c.*] The meaning may be that they are not bound and delivered over like "pale captives" to premature death (cp. the paraphrase of P.B.V. "They are in no peril of death"): or that they have no torments of pain and disease (R.V. marg. *pangs*) in their death, but have a peaceful end to a prosperous life. Cp. Job xxi. 13, 23.

But the assertion of death-scenes premature, and the rhythm of the Hebrew is halting, sense and rhythm both gain by a simple emendation which is adopted by most editors:

For they have no torments:
Sound and stalwart is their body.

5, 6. **They have no share in the misery of mortals;**
Neither are they plagued along with other men:
Therefore pride is as a chain about their neck;
Violence covereth them as a garment.

Though "man is born for misery" (Job v. 7), they escape the common lot of humanity, and consequently their pride and brutality are unchecked. For the metaphors cp. Prov. i. 9; Ps. cix. 18. Chains were worn on the neck in Eastern countries for ornament by men as well as women, and also as badges of office (Gen. xli. 42; Dan. v. 7).

7. According to the Massoretic Text the first line describes the insolent look of these stock faced villains. Cp. Job xv. 27. But the LXX and Syr. represent a different reading, which suits the probable sense of the next line better, and gets rid of a grammatical anomaly. Render

Their iniquity cometh forth from the heart:
The imaginations of their mind overflow.

The word for *heart* is the same as that in xvii. 10, which according to Robertson Smith (*Religion of the Semites*, p. 360) means properly *the midriff*. The verse is thus a continuation of *v.* 6. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"; and no fear or shame controls their utterance of their thoughts. Cp. Jer. v. 28.

8. The rhythm seems to require a different division of the verse from that given by the Massoretic accentuation, thus;

They scoff, and talk of evil:
Of oppression do they talk from on high.

Not the commandments of God (Deut. vi. 7; xi. 19) but their own

9 They set their mouth against the heavens,
And their tongue walketh through the earth.
10 Therefore his people return hither:
And waters of a full *cup* are wrung out to them.
11 And they say, How doth God know?
And is there knowledge in the most High?

nefarious designs are the subject of their conversation: they talk "as if they were gods and their words oracles." Cp. Is. xiv. 13. P.B.V. "their talking is against the most High" (Great Bible from Münster) is untenable.

9. The A.V. gives a good sense: they blaspheme God and dictate to men. Cp. Dan. vii. 25. But probably the R.V. is right in rendering,

They have set their mouth in the heavens.

The clause expands the words of the preceding verse "from on high." They make an impious claim of divine authority, and dictate to men as though the earth belonged to them.

10, 11. The mass of men are carried away by their evil example.

10. A difficult verse. The general sense appears to be that attracted by the prosperity and pretensions of the wicked a crowd of imitators turn to follow them, and in their company drink to the dregs the cup of sinful pleasure. The Psalmist's temptation is intensified as he contemplates the popularity of the wicked. Cp. xlix. 13. The details however are obscure. *Therefore*, because they are deluded by the extravagant pretensions of the wicked. The pronoun *his* is commonly explained to refer to the wicked regarded as a whole, or to some conspicuous leader among them. The context hardly allows of its reference to God. But the LXX and Syr. may preserve the true reading 'my people.' the Psalmist speaking with sorrow of his deluded countrymen. *Return* should rather be *turn; hither*, to the wicked and their pernicious ways.

The reading of the *Kĕthîbh* given in R.V. marg., *he will bring back his people hither*, finds no support from the Ancient Versions, and admits of no satisfactory explanation. *Waters of fulness are drained by them* is a metaphor for the enjoyment of pleasure; or possibly for imbibing pernicious principles. Cp. Job xv. 16; and the saying of Jose ben Joezer, "Let thy house be a meeting house for the wise...and drink their words with thirstiness." *Pirqe Aboth*, i. 4, cp. 12.

11. The speakers in this verse are not 'the wicked,' but the deluded mass of their followers described in *v.* 10. They adopt the language of their leaders, and question God's knowledge of their doings in particular, and even His omniscience in general. Cp. x. 4, 11, 13. The names of God—*El*, the Mighty One, *Elyôn*, the Supreme Ruler of the Universe—are chosen so as to accentuate the blasphemy of their scepticism.

12—14. The Psalmist's temptation as he contemplated the scene. Some commentators regard these verses as the continuation of the speech in *v.* 11, giving the thoughts of the followers of the wicked, the

Behold, these *are* the ungodly,
Who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches.
Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain,
And washed my hands in innocency.
For all the day long have I been plagued,
And chastened every morning.
If I say, I will speak thus;
Behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy children.

speaker in *vv.* 13, 14 being any individual among them. But it is preferable to regard them as the words of the Psalmist himself, expressing the thoughts which he had been tempted to indulge. (1) The form of the sentence, *Behold, such* &c., points to a summing up (cp. Job v. 27; viii. 19, 20; xviii. 21); (2) 'the wicked' is a more natural designation for the Psalmist than for their own followers to use; (3) there is nothing to shew that the speaker in v. 15 is another than the speaker in *vv.* 13, 14; (4) the LXX (followed by the P.B.V.) inserts *And I said* at the beginning of *v.* 13.

12. Behold, such are the wicked!
And being always at ease they have gotten much substance.

At ease is a favourite word in Job: e.g. iii. 26; xii. 6 (A.V. *prosper*); xvi. 12; xx. 20; xxi. 23; cp. Jer. xii. 1.

13. *Verily*] The same word *ak* as in *v.* 1. R.V. **Surely in vain have I cleansed my heart.** If the wicked prosper thus, his endeavours after holiness have been wasted. There is no reward for the righteous: nay (*v.* 14) his own reward has been chastisement. He would not have claimed to be sinless any more than Job (cp. Prov. xx. 9), but he has a good conscience. For the second line cp. Ps. xxvi. 6. The metaphor is derived from the ceremonies of the Levitical ritual. See Ex. xxx. 17 ff.; cp. Deut. xxi. 6.

14. *For* &c.] Apparently the recompence of his piety has been continual chastisement. The wicked are not plagued (*v.* 5), but for him there has been constant renewal of divinely inflicted sufferings. Cp. xxxix. 10, 11; Job vii. 18.

15-28. Faith triumphant in the conviction of an ultimate judgement and the consciousness of the supreme blessedness of fellowship with God.

15—17. Instead of parading his doubts, he wrestled with them until in the sanctuary the solution of them was revealed to him.

15. If I had said, I will speak thus;
Behold, I had dealt treacherously with the generation of thy children (R.V.).

If he had paraded his perplexities, and made open profession of the wicked man's creed (Job xxi. 15), he would have been faithless to the

16 When I thought to know this,
It *was* too painful for me;
17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God;
Then understood I their end.
18 Surely thou didst set them in slippery *places*:
Thou castedst them down into destruction.
19 How are they *brought* into desolation, as *in* a moment!
They are utterly consumed with terrors.
20 As a dream when *one* awaketh;
So, O Lord, when *thou* awakest, thou shalt despise their image.

interests of God's family. In the O.T. Israel as a people is called Jehovah's son (Ex. iv. 22) or Jehovah's sons (Deut. xiv. 1), but the individual does not yet claim for himself the title of son except in an official and representative capacity (lxxiii. 7). The recognition of that closer personal relation is reserved for the N.T. (Gal. iii. 26).

16, 17. **And I kept thinking how to understand this:**
It was misery in mine eyes:
Until I went into the sanctuary of God,
And considered their latter end.

As he kept pondering how to reconcile the facts of experience with the revealed truth of God's character and promises, the sight of the world's disorder seemed intolerable, until in the Temple, the place of God's Presence, where He reveals His power and glory (lxiii. 2), he was enabled to realise the transitoriness of the prosperity of the wicked, and their nothingness in the sight of God. *The sanctuary* (lit. as in lxviii. 35, *sanctuaries*) is to be understood literally: the explanation of it as "the sacred mysteries of God's Providence" (cp. Wisdom ii. 22) is attractive but too fanciful.

18—20. The awful fate of the wicked is the *negative* solution of the problem.

18. **Surely in slippery places dost thou appoint their lot:**
Suddenly dost thou cast them down into ruin.

Surely, as in *vv.* 1, 13, means 'after all.' They are set in dangerous places where they will stumble and fall. Cp. xxxv. 6; Jer. xxiii. 12. The word for *ruin* occurs elsewhere only in lxxiv. 3.

19. **How are they become a desolation in a moment!**
They are at an end, they are consumed with terrors.

The word *terrors*, found here only in the Psalter, is a favourite word in Job in similar connexions (xviii. 11, 14, &c.).

20. *As a dream*] Cp. Job xx. 8; Is. xxix. 7.

when thou awakest] When thou arousest thyself, a different word from that in the previous line, used in vii. 6, xxxv. 23, of God bestirring Himself to judgement. The word may mean *in the city* (R.V. marg. and the Ancient Versions); but this rendering yields no satisfactory

Thus my heart was grieved, 21
And I was pricked *in* my reins.
So foolish *was* I, and ignorant: 22
I was *as* a beast before thee.
Nevertheless I *am* continually with thee: 23
Thou hast holden *me* by my right hand.
Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, 24
And afterwards receive me *to* glory.

sense: the paraphrase of P.B.V., 'so shalt thou make their image to vanish out of the city,' is quite unjustifiable.

their image] Cp. xxxix. 6, note. All their brave pomp is a phantom, a mere counterfeit of reality, an *eidolon*; and God rates it at its true value.

21, 22. The Psalmist's confession of his error.

21. *Thus*] R.V. **For.** If this rendering is adopted, the connexion is with the general sense of the preceding verses:—'I failed to perceive the truth until my eyes were opened in the sanctuary, *for*' &c. But it is better to render:

When my heart grew sour,
And I was pricked in my reins,
I was brutish and ignorant,
I became a mere beast with thee.

He confesses the folly of his former impatience. He had lowered himself to the level of a beast (xlix. 10), for what distinguishes man from the lower animals is his power of communion with God. *Behēmōth*, rendered *beast*, might be taken, as in Job xl. 15, to mean 'the hippopotamus,' as an emblem for 'a monster of stupidity,' but the more general rendering is preferable. The reins (*renes*, the kidneys) were regarded as the seat of the emotions. Cp. vii. 9.

23—26. The *positive* solution of the Psalmist's perplexity: the only true and abiding happiness is to be found in fellowship with God.

23. *Nevertheless*] Lit., *But as for me, I am* &c. Render, **Whereas I am** &c. He contrasts his real position of fellowship with God with his former delusion and also with the insecurity of the wicked.

thou hast holden &c.] Better as R.V., **thou hast holden my right hand.** Cp. lxiii. 8.

24. *with thy counsel*] Tacitly he contrasts the course of his life with that of the wicked, for counsel is an attribute of the Divine Wisdom (Prov. viii. 14), which the wicked despise (Prov. i. 25, 30).

to *glory*] Or, *with glory* (R.V. marg.); or, as the word is often translated, *with honour*.

The meaning of this verse is much disputed. Can we suppose that the words bore for the Psalmist the sense which they naturally bear for the Christian in the fuller light of the Gospel? Do they express his faith that God's guidance of him through this life will be followed by

25 Whom have I in heaven *but thee?*
And *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire besides thee.

reception into the glory of His Presence after death? Or do they simply express his confidence that God will guide him safely through his present troubles, so that in the end honour, not shame, will be his lot, and his acceptableness to God will be demonstrated to the world? Delitzsch finds in them the larger hope, and thinks that here, as in xlix. 15, there is a reference to the assumption of Enoch (Gen. v. 24); but he admits that there was as yet no divine promise holding out the prospect of a heavenly triumph to the struggling church on earth upon which such a hope could rest. If the Psalmist possessed this definite hope, we might have expected that he would lay more stress upon it as affording a solution of his perplexities. Such a hope moreover would rise far above the general level of the O.T. view of a future life, at any rate till the latest period. And no parallel can be quoted for the absolute use of 'glory' in the sense of 'heavenly' or 'eternal glory.' Elsewhere in the Psalter *kābōd* is used in the sense of 'honour' (lxii. 7; lxxxiv. 11; cxii. 9; cxlix. 5); and in Job and Proverbs, to which it is natural to turn for the elucidation of the language of a Psalm so closely connected with the reflections of the 'Wise,' it bears the same sense. It is often coupled with riches and life, and contrasted with shame. See Job xix. 9; xxix. 20; Prov. iii. 16, 35; viii. 18; xv. 33; xxi. 21; xxii. 4.

It seems therefore that as the Psalmist anticipates that judgement will overtake the wicked in this world, so he looks for such a deliverance and advancement in this world as will visibly demonstrate that he is the object of God's loving favour, and prove that "there is a reward for the righteous." Cp. lxxi. 20, 21. This life is for him the scene of God's dealings with men, and a full vindication of God's moral government is looked for within the limits of individual experience. See further in *Introd.* pp. xcii ff.: and consult Oehler's *O. T. Theology*, § 246, and Schultz's *O. T. Theology*, ch. xlii.

It may be noted that the LXX, followed of course by the Vulg., sees no reference here to a future life, but renders, "In thy counsel didst thou guide me, and with glory didst thou receive me."

If this view is correct, the Psalmist's faith is even grander than if he looked forward to glorification in a future life. He rises victorious over the world of sense and appearance in the inward certainty of the reality of his communion with God, and the absolute conviction that this is the highest good and the truest happiness of which man is capable. Such a knowledge is eternal life; and the possibility of it is in itself a pledge that the communion thus begun cannot suddenly be interrupted by death, but must be carried on to an ever fuller perfection.

25. *But thee* is rightly supplied in the first line, which receives its completion and explanation from the second. The idea which logically is one is divided into two clauses for the sake of the poetical rhythm.

beside thee] Lit. *with thee.* If I have THEE, there is none else in heaven and earth whom I desire. Thou art my only good and

My flesh and my heart faileth: 26
But God *is* the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.
For lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: 27
Thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.
But *it is* good for me to draw near to God: 28
I have put my trust in the Lord GOD,
That *I* may declare all thy works.

source of happiness in the whole universe. Cp. xvi. 2, R.V., "Thou art my Lord; I have no good beyond thee."

26. *God is the strength of my heart*] Lit., the rock of my heart. Though bodily and mental powers fail, God is his sure refuge in every danger (xvii. 2, 3, 7), the possession which cannot be taken from him (xvi. 5; cxlii. 5). Never, now that he has come to his right mind, will he look for any other refuge (Is. xliv. 8), or envy those "whose portion in life is of the world" (xvii. 14).

27, 28. The final contrast of death and life.

27. *they that are far from thee*] Better, they that go far from thee, Vulg., *qui elongant se a te*. Desertion of God the source of life (xxxvi. 9) can lead only to ruin and death.

all them that go a whoring from thee] All Israelites who are faithless to the covenant with God. The figure of marriage is used to express the closeness of Jehovah's relation to His people (Hos. ii. 2 ff.; Is. liv. 5, 6; and often), and consequently apostasy is spoken of as infidelity to the marriage vow.

28. But as for me, to draw near to God is good for me:
In the Lord Jehovah have I made my refuge;
That I may speak of all thy works.

Emphatically he contrasts himself with those who 'go far from God.' Once he had been tempted to ask what profit there was in serving God, and openly to speak (*v.* 15) of his doubts: but now he can find an endless theme for praise in the dealings of God with the righteous and the wicked. The LXX reads, "that I may declare all thy praises in the gates of the daughter of Sion," as in ix. 14; and this may preserve the original reading, for the present Heb. text sounds incomplete. The R.V. "to speak of all thy works in the gates of the daughter of Sion" combines the LXX with the Heb.

PSALM LXXIV.

This Psalm and Ps. lxxix are closely connected in thought and language[1], and reflect the same historical situation. If they are not

[1] Comp. lxxiv. 1, 9, 10 with lxxix. 5, *how long, for ever*: lxxiv. 3, 7 with lxxix. 1, the desecration of the sanctuary: lxxiv. 1 with lxxix. 5, God's wrath: lxxiv. 1 with lxxix. 13, *sheep of thy pasture*: lxxiv. 2 with lxxix. 1, thine inheritance: lxxiv. 10, 18, 22, 23 with lxxix. 4, 12, the reproaches of the enemy: lxxiv. 7, 10, 18, 21 with lxxix. 6, 9, God's *name*.

from the same pen, they must at least belong to the same period, and must be considered together.

The circumstances under which they were written stand out clearly. The holy land has been invaded by heathen enemies; the Temple has been desecrated and burnt to the ground; Jerusalem is in ruins; numbers of Israelites have been slaughtered, and their bodies left unburied; Israel is the scorn of neighbouring nations; the outward ordinances of religion are suspended; Jahweh seems permanently to have cast off His people and no prophet has arisen to know no recovery; no one can foresee the end of its humiliation.

It has generally been thought that there are two periods, and only two, to which this description can apply:—the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldæans in B.C. 586, and the oppression of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes in B.C. 170—165. Almost all commentators who admit the existence of Maccabæan Psalms in the Psalter at all agree in referring these Psalms to the latter occasion, and we may consider it first. Antiochus IV, surnamed Epiphanes, became king of Syria in B.C. 175. After his second expedition to Egypt, B.C. 170, he invaded Jerusalem, plundered the Temple of its treasures, and massacred thousands of the people. "All the house of Israel was grieving with exceeding" (1 Macc. i. 20—28). Two years later, after his fourth Egyptian campaign, Antiochus sent a force under his general Apollonius to occupy Jerusalem. He seized the city by treachery, plundered it and set it on fire, massacred many of the people, sold many women and children as slaves, and fortifying the city of David, established a Syrian garrison there (1 Macc. i. 29 ff.). Antiochus next resolved to stamp out the Jewish religion. He promulgated an edict prohibiting the practice of all its distinctive ceremonies upon pain of death, and ordering the Jews to take part in heathen rites. The Temple was desecrated; an idol altar set up on the altar, and sacrifices offered upon it to Zeus Olympius; all the copies of the Law that could be found were destroyed or burned, and their possession was made a capital offence. Many Israelites turned apostate, but many preferred death to the abnegation of their religion. The resistance inaugurated by Mattathias at Modin was crowned with success. Under the heroic leadership of his son Judas the Jews recovered their liberty, and in B.C. 165 the Temple was cleansed and re-dedicated with great rejoicings (1 Macc. iv. 36 ff.).

In many respects these Psalms appear remarkably to reflect the circumstances of this period; they illustrate and are illustrated by the narrative in 1 and 2 Maccabees in a number of details; and in particular the complaints put into the mouth of Mattathias (1 Macc. ii. 6 ff.) and Judas (2 Macc. viii. 2 ff.) present many points of resemblance. The special arguments urged in favour of the Maccabæan date are (1) that the absence of prophets spoken of in lxxiv. 9 was a marked characteristic of the Maccabæan times (1 Macc. iv. 46; ix. 27: xiv. 41), whereas Jeremiah and Ezekiel survived the destruction of Jerusalem for many years, and the former had predicted the duration of the captivity: (2) that the existence of synagogues (lxxiv. 8) points to a late period of Jewish history: (3) that the language of the Psalms implies that Israel was suffering a *religious* persecution (lxxiv. 10, 18, 22): (4) that the 'signs'

of the heathen in the Temple and the absence of Israel's 'signs' (lxxiv. 4, 9) clearly refer to the introduction of idolatrous emblems and the attempt to destroy the Jewish religion.

Upon these grounds these Psalms have very generally been assigned to the period between B.C. 170 and B.C. 165, or more particularly between the desecration of the Temple in B.C. 168 and its re-dedication in B.C. 165. At first sight the arguments appear to be convincing. But it has already been pointed out in the introduction to Ps. xliv that the history of the growth of the Psalter makes the presence of Maccabaean Psalms in the Elohistic collection highly improbable. In view of this improbability it is necessary further to examine the arguments alleged in proof of the Maccabaean date. Now (1) though Jeremiah and Ezekiel lived for several years after the destruction of Jerusalem, the complaint of lxxiv. 9 is intelligible, if the Psalm was written, as it may well have been, after their death. It finds at least a partial parallel in Lam. ii. 9. Further, though the question 'How long' may seem strange in the face of Jeremiah's prediction of the duration of the Captivity, it could still be asked even after the first Return (Zech. i. 12). (2) It will be shewn in the notes on lxxiv. 8 that the LXX, the oldest authority for the text and interpretation of the passage, finds no allusion in it to synagogues, but understands it of the solemn feasts, the suspension of which is deplored in Lamentations as one of the great calamities of the Exile. (3) Every war against Israel was in a sense a religious war, and the language is no more than might have been used with reference to any occasion when the humiliation of Israel gave the heathen opportunity to speak contemptuously of Israel's God. (4) The 'signs' of the enemy may equally well mean the military ensigns of the Chaldeans, and the absence of Israel's 'signs' may refer to the suspension of festivals and other outward ordinances of religion.

Thus the special arguments for the Maccabaean date break down upon examination. But further, there are allusions which fit the earlier date better than the later, and there are some marked features of the Maccabaean period which are conspicuously absent.

(1) The description of the burning and destruction of the Temple and the demolition of the city agrees with the account of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans (2 Kings xxv. 9, 10), whereas in the Syrian troubles only the gates of the Temple were burnt and some of the subordinate buildings destroyed (1 Macc. iv. 38), and though the city had suffered, it does not seem to have been laid in ruins.

(2) The *prolonged* desolation of the city and humiliation of Israel point decidedly to the earlier occasion. The interval from the outrage of Antiochus to the re-dedication of the Temple was only three years, and even from his first invasion of Jerusalem only five years, a short period, surely, to account for the strong expressions in Ps. lxxiv.

(3) The mockery of the neighbouring peoples was a conspicuous feature at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem (Ps. cxxxvii; Ezek. xxv). (4) The parallels with Jeremiah, Lamentations, and Ezekiel are at least as striking as those with 1 Maccabees[1].

[1] Comp. lxxiv. 4 with Lam. ii. 6, 7; lxxiv. 7 with Lam. ii. 2; lxxiv. 9 with Lam. ii. 6, 9; lxxix. 6, 7 with Jer. x. 25; lxxiv. 1, lxxix. 13 with Jer. xxiii. 1; and further references in the notes.

Arguments from silence are no doubt precarious, but it must be noted that these Psalms contain no reference to some prominent features of the Maccabaean times. There is no allusion to the intrigues which had disgraced the hierarchy, or to the religious divisions of the time and the apostasy of many of the people, or to the deliberate attempt of Antiochus to enforce idolatry and destroy the Jewish religion.

On the whole, then, the view which seems most in accordance with the evidence is that these Psalms were written some fifteen or twenty years after the destruction of Jerusalem, about the same time as the Lamentations. The author might have been an eye-witness of the destruction of the Temple, which he describes so graphically, while at the same time the exile had lasted long enough to make it seem as though, in spite of Jeremiah's predictions of restoration, God had permanently rejected His people. This hypothesis we may at any rate take as the basis of our study, referring to the Book of Maccabees only for illustration.[1]

It has been suggested that these Psalms, though originally written with reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, were re-touched to adapt them to the circumstances of the later struggle. The possibility may be borne in mind, but the conjecture does not admit of proof. Naturally the Psalms would have been favourites at that time, and this may account for many of the coincidences of thought and expression.

It may indeed be the case that it has been too hastily assumed by the majority of commentators that these Psalms must refer to one or other of the periods above mentioned. Ewald would connect them, together with xliv, lx, lxxx, lxxxv, with disasters which befel the restored community in the earlier part of the fifth century B.C., to which reference is made in Neh. i. 3. But it must be noted that Nehemiah's concern is for the city only: there is no mention of any desecration of the Temple.

Robertson Smith (*Old Test. in Jewish Ch.*, ed. 2, p. 438) prefers Ewald's earlier view, and connects them with the rebellion of the Jews under Artaxerxes Ochus (circa B.C. 350), which was put down with great severity. Our knowledge of the history of that period is, however, extremely scanty, and the hypothesis lacks evidence.

Psalm lxxiv may be divided into three stanzas, thus:

i. The Psalmist expostulates with God for abandoning His people, and entreats Him to come to their help, enforcing his appeal by a vivid description of the havoc which the enemy had wrought in the sanctuary, and the despair which is seizing upon Israel (1—9).

ii. He renews his expostulation, bidding God remember that His honour is at stake, and recalling, at once by way of pleading with God and for his own consolation, the sovereignty of Israel's King in history and in nature (10—17).

iii. Repeating the arguments he has already used, he once more urgently entreats God not to abandon His people to the mercy of their foes, or any longer to endure the insults which are heaped upon Him daily (18—23).

[1] On the question of Maccabaean Psalms generally, see *Introd.* p. xliv ff.

Maschil of Asaph.

O God, why hast thou cast *us* off for ever? 74
Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?
Remember thy congregation, *which* thou hast purchased of 2
old;
The rod of thine inheritance, *which* thou hast redeemed;
This mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.
Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; 3
Even all *that* the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary.
Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations; 4

On *Maschil* see *Introd.* p. xix.

1—3. An appeal to God, Who seems to have abandoned and forgotten the people and city of His choice.

1. *for ever*] God's rejection of His people seems to have become permanent. The same thought recurs in *vv.* 3, 10, 19, lxxix. 5. Cp. Lam. v. 20; Ps. xliv. 23; Lam. iii. 31.

smoke] A metaphor for the outward signs of the fire of wrath. Cp. xviii. 8; lxxx. 4; Lam. ii. 3, 4.

the sheep of thy pasture] The exact phrase recurs only in lxxix. 13; c. 3; Jer. xxiii. 1; Ezek. xxxiv. 31; but cp. xcv. 7. The title implies that Israel has a right to claim God's loving care in virtue of His relation to it: a relation which *v.* 2 points out was initiated by God Himself. The representation of God as Israel's shepherd is common. See lxxx. 1; lxxvii. 20; lxxviii. 52; Is. xl. 11; Jer. xxxi. 10; Ezek. xxxiv. 11 ff.

2. *Remember*] Cp. *vv.* 18, 22; Lam. v. 1; Is. lxii. 6.

purchased...redeemed] Reminiscences of the Song of Moses (Ex. xv. 13, 16). Cp. lxxvii. 15; lxxviii. 35; Deut. xxxii. 6.

the rod &c.] Render with R.V.,

Which thou hast redeemed to be the tribe of thine inheritance.

The nation is called a *tribe*, as in Am. iii. 1 it is called a *family*. So too in Jer. x. 16 (=li. 19); cp. Is. lxiii. 17.

this mount Zion] Omit *this*: the pronoun here serves for the relative.

dwelt] Cp. lxviii. 16. The verb is that from which later Judaism derived the term *Shechinah* to denote the abiding Presence of God among His people.

3. *Lift up thy feet*] Bestir Thyself: come in might and majesty to visit and deliver. *the perpetual desolations*] R.V. the perpetual ruins: a word found elsewhere only in lxxiii. 18. Cp. the threat, Jer. xxv. 9, and the promises, Is. lviii. 12, lxi. 4.

even *all* &c.] Better as R.V., All the evil that the enemy hath done in the sanctuary; or R.V. marg., *The enemy hath wrought all evil.*

4—9. A graphic picture of the desecration of the Temple by the heathen enemies of Israel.

4. Render, Thine adversaries roared in the midst of thy meeting-

They set up their ensigns *for* signs.
5 *A man* was famous according as he had lifted up
Axes upon the thick trees.
6 But now they break down the carved work thereof
At once with axes and hammers.
7 They have cast fire into thy sanctuary,
They have defiled *by casting down* the dwelling place of thy name to the ground.

place. *Môʿēd* may mean either the place or the time at which God meets His people, as of old He met them at "the tent of meeting" (Ex. xxix. 42—44). Here probably the Temple is meant. Its courts were filled with heathen foes instead of reverent worshippers: they rang with wild shouts of triumph instead of the praises of Israel. Cp. Lam. ii. 6, 7.

they set up their ensigns for *signs*] Lit., *their signs as signs*. Probably their military ensigns or standards (Num. ii. 2) are meant. The erection of these in the Temple itself was a visible sign of its desecration, and of the completeness of the triumph of the heathen. Many commentators however suppose that religious emblems and ceremonies are meant, and those who regard this Psalm as Maccabæan suppose that the idolatrous altars erected and rites celebrated by command of Antiochus are referred to. See 1 Macc. i. 45—49, 54, 59, iii. 48.

5, 6. The R.V. gives the probable sense of these verses, but does not reproduce the pictorial tenses, which represent the work of destruction as though it were going on before the reader's eyes. Render:

They seem as men that lift up
Axes upon a thicket of trees.
And now the carved work thereof together
They are battering down with hatchet and hammers.

The enemy are compared to wood-cutters hewing down a forest (Jer. xlvi. 22, 23); and the simile may have been suggested by the fact that the carved work on the Temple walls represented "palm trees and open flowers" (1 Kings vi. 29).

The P.B.V., "He that hewed timber afore out of the thick trees was known to bring it to an excellent work. But now they break down &c.," introduced into the Great Bible from Münster, gives a suggestive contrast between the skill of the artist and the vandalism of the destroyer; but the present Heb. text cannot bear this meaning.

7. They have set thy sanctuary on fire;
They have profaned the dwelling place of thy name even to the ground. (R.V.)

The verse appears to speak of a complete destruction of the Temple by fire. This was done by Nebuzaradan (2 Kings xxv. 9, 10) but not by the emissaries of Antiochus, for Judas found the main building standing, though the gates had been burned and the priests' chambers pulled down (1 Macc. iv. 38). Comp. the stress which Ezekiel lays on the desecration of the sanctuary (vii. 21, 22, 24). See also Lam. ii. 2.

They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: 8
They have burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land.
We see not our signs: 9
There is no more any prophet:
Neither *is there* among us any that knoweth how long.
O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? 10

For *the dwelling place of thy name* cp. Deut. xii. 11; xvi. 2, 6, 11, &c.; Jer. vii. 12; Ps. xxvi. 8.

8. **They said in their heart, Let us crush them altogether:**
They burned up all the meeting places of God in the land.

For the form of expression cp. lxxxiii. 4.

The interpretation of this verse is specially important in its bearing on the date of the Psalm. It would be a strong argument for the late date if it really contained an allusion to synagogues. Though the origin of these buildings for purposes of worship and instruction is hidden in obscurity, it can hardly have been earlier than the post-exilic period. (See Schürer, *Hist. of the Jewish People*, Div. ii. § 27, E.T. ii. ii. 54.) But it is doubtful whether there is any such allusion. The word translated *synagogues* is the same as that used in *v.* 4, meaning either *place* or *time of meeting*. In the plural it always has the latter meaning. Now if the Psalm were Maccabaean and the passage referred to synagogues, it might be expected that the LXX translators, working no long time afterwards, would have so understood it. But they do not; and apparently they had a different text before them, for they render: *Come, let us cause the feasts of the Lord to cease out of the land*. Similarly the Syriac. These versions then understand the words to refer to the festivals or solemn assemblies. Now the cessation of the festivals is one of the points mentioned in the Lamentations (i. 4; ii. 6) as a special calamity; and in Hos. ii. 11 the Heb. word presumed by the LXX here is used in the prediction of the cessation of religious festivals in the Captivity. This reading and interpretation suit the context. The stated festivals were among the 'signs,' the symbols of God's presence and favour, of which *v.* 9 speaks.

9. *our signs*] The outward and visible symbols of our religion, such as sabbath and festival, which God "had caused to be forgotten in Zion" (Lam. ii. 6). The sabbath is spoken of as a sign in Ex. xxxi. 13, 17; Ezek. xx. 12, 20. The words would of course be specially appropriate to the time at which Antiochus attempted to suppress all the distinctive ordinances of the Jewish religion (1 Macc. i. 45, 46, 60, 61). Note the contrast with the 'signs' of hostile domination, *v.* 4.

there is *no more any prophet*] A characteristic of the Maccabaean age (1 Macc. iv. 46; ix. 27; xiv. 41): but the complaints of the exile are not dissimilar (Lam. ii. 9; Ezek. vii. 26); and even after the Return the angel in Zechariah's vision (i. 12) asks 'How long?'

10, 11. Once more the Psalmist expostulates with God for His inaction.

10. *How long*] Taking up the last words of *v.* 9, the Psalmist begins

Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?
11 Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand?
Pluck *it* out of thy bosom.
12 For God *is* my King of old,
Working salvation in the midst of the earth.
13 Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength:
Thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.
14 Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces,
And gavest him *to be* meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.

the second division of the Psalm with an appeal parallel to that in *vv.* 1—3. There he entreats God to have pity on His people's need, here to have regard to His own honour.

reproach...blaspheme] In act and word. Like the Assyrians, Is. x. 7 ff., xxxvii. 23 ff.; and Syrians, Dan. vii. 8, 25; xi. 36; 1 Macc. ii. 6.

11. Why drawest thou back thy hand, even thy right hand? (Pluck it) out of thy bosom (and) consume (them).

The right hand which in days of old was stretched out to annihilate the Egyptians (Ex. xv. 12), is now as it were thrust idly into the folded garment. Cp. Lam. ii. 3.

12—17. Yet God's mighty works of Redemption and Creation attest His power to interpose for the deliverance of His people. Cp. lxxvii. 10 ff.

12. *For*] Better as R.V., Yet. In spite of His present inactivity God has been and still is Israel's King. The Psalmist speaks in the name of the nation. Cp. Ex. xv. 18; Ps. xliv. 4; Hab. i. 12.

salvation] Lit. *salvations*, manifold and great acts of deliverance.

in the midst of the earth] As in Ex. viii. 22, the phrase implies that His wonders are wrought in the sight of all the nations and attest His claim of universal sovereignty (lxxvii. 14).

13. *Thou*] *Vv.* 13, 14, 15, 17 all begin with an emphatic THOU; *v.* 16 with THINE. It is THOU and none other, Who didst and doest all these things. The Asaphite Psalms are full of references to the Exodus.

by thy strength] Cp. lxxvii. 14; Ex. xv. 13. *The dragons* or *sea monsters*, and *leviathan*, either the crocodile or some vague mythological monster, are symbolical of Egypt. Cp. Is. xxvii. 1; li. 9; Ezek. xxix. 3.

in the waters] Lit. *upon the waters*, the symbolical monsters being imagined as floating upon the surface of the water. The reference of course is to the destruction of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea.

14. *Thou brakest* &c. **Thou didst crush...thou didst give him** &c. The dead bodies of the Egyptians were cast up on the shore (Ex. xiv. 30) to be devoured by the wild beasts of the desert. Cp. Ezek. xxix. 3—5. For 'people' applied to animals cp. Prov. xxx. 25, 26.

Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: 15
Thou driedst up mighty rivers.
The day *is* thine, the night also *is* thine: 16
Thou hast prepared the light and the sun.
Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: 17
Thou hast made summer and winter.
Remember this, *that* the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, 18
And *that* the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.
O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude 19
of the wicked:
Forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever.
Have respect unto the covenant: 20

15. Thou didst cleave fountain and torrent:
Thou didst dry up perennial rivers.

God's omnipotence was shewn alike in cleaving the rock so that water flowed out (Ex. xvii. 6; Num. xx. 8; Ps. lxxviii. 15; Is. xlviii. 21), and in drying up the perennial stream of the Jordan (Josh. iii, iv. 23).

16. 17. All the fixed laws and ordinances of the natural world were established and are maintained by God.

16. *The day* &c.] Thine is the day and the night is thine.

the light and the sun] Possibly equivalent to 'the moon and the sun' (civ. 19); but more probably 'the luminaries and especially the sun.' Cp. Gen. i. 14, 16.

17. *the borders of the earth*] The divisions of land and sea (civ. 9; Job xxxviii. 8 ff.; Jer. v. 22), and the apportionment of the land among the nations (Deut. xxxii. 8; Acts xvii. 26).

18—23. Emboldened by his contemplation of the power of God in history and in nature the Psalmist returns to prayer.

18. *the foolish people*] R.V. a foolish people. The epithet denotes the moral perversity of opposition to God. Cp. xiv. 1, note. It is applied to the heathen in Deut. xxxii. 21.

19. The rendering of R.V., O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the wild beast, is preferable to that of R.V. marg., *O deliver not thy turtledove unto the greedy multitude.* The dove is an emblem of the defenceless people.

forget not &c.] Forget not the family of thine afflicted ones for ever: or, *the life of thine afflicted ones.* There is a play upon the different senses of the word *chayyath:* in the first line it means *wild beast* (living creature), in the second *family* (or *life*). For the meaning *family* see note on lxviii. 10.

20. *the covenant*] With the patriarchs, Gen. ix. 9 ff.; xvii. 2 ff.; with the nation at the Exodus, Ex. xxiv. 8; with David, Ps. lxxxix. 3, 39.

For the dark places of the earth are full *of* the habitations of cruelty.

21 O let not the oppressed return ashamed:
Let the poor and needy praise thy name.

22 Arise, O God, plead thine own cause:
Remember how the foolish *man* reproacheth thee daily.

23 Forget not the voice of thine enemies:
The tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually.

the dark places of the earth] The heathen lands where Israel was in exile. We might also render, the dark places of the land, i.e. the caves and hiding places where the persecuted Israelites took refuge, and where they were tracked out and butchered (1 Macc. i. 53, ii. 27, 31).

are full of *the habitations of cruelty*] R.V. violence. If the text is right, the sense seems to be 'places where violence makes its home.' But the expression is a strange one, and the emendation *are full of insolence and violence*, adopted by many commentators, which requires a very slight change in the consonants of the text, is plausible. Cp. lxxiii. 6; Gen. vi. 11, 13.

21. *O let not the oppressed* &c.] Let not the crushed or down-trodden (ix. 9; x. 18) turn back from Thee unanswered and disappointed.

let the poor &c.] Let the afflicted have cause to praise Thee for answered prayer.

22. 23. A final appeal. Elsewhere the Psalmist prays 'plead my cause' (xliii. 1), but Israel's cause is God's cause: His honour is at stake.

the foolish man] The fool, the members of 'the foolish people,' *v.* 18. The Targ. paraphrases, "the reproach of thy people from the foolish king," but there is nothing to shew that this meant Antiochus rather than Nebuchadnezzar. *daily*] All the day (R.V.).

23. *thine enemies*] Thine adversaries, as in *v.* 4.

increaseth] Rather, ascendeth (R.V.), to heaven, challenging Thee to act. Cp. Is. xxxvii. 29.

PSALM LXXV.

In one of his prophecies of the approaching judgement which was to shatter the power of Assyria and set Israel free, Isaiah compares the rejoicings with which the deliverance would be celebrated to the rejoicings of the Passover festival. "Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy feast is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel" (Is. xxx. 29). Of such songs this and the following Psalm may well—like Pss. xlvi—xlviii in the Korahite collection—be examples.

They are closely connected in thought and language[1], and may naturally be referred, if not to the same author, at least to the same period. They speak of a great act of judgement, by which God had condemned the proud pretensions of some boastful enemy; of a supernatural annihilation of the hostile forces which had threatened Zion, the city of His choice, whereby He had manifested His Presence and power among His people. The destruction of Sennacherib's army was just such an act of judgement, such a direct intervention on behalf of Zion. Sennacherib, like Pharaoh, had challenged Jehovah to a trial of strength; and through the Assyrian prophecies of Isaiah there runs the thought that it was a crisis comparable to the Exodus, and second only to the Exodus in importance. These Psalms are full of coincidences—indirect rather than direct—with Isaiah's prophecies of that period, and they breathe an intensity of feeling which indicates that the poet himself had experienced that crisis of uttermost peril and marvellous deliverance. The addition in the LXX title of Ps. lxxvi. 'A song *with reference to the Assyrians*,' whether due to tradition or conjecture, shews that the Psalm was at an early date connected with the deliverance from Sennacherib.

Some commentators have supposed that these Psalms celebrate Maccabæan victories, such as those of Judas over Apollonius (1 Macc. iii. 10 ff.) and Seron (1 Macc. iii. 13 ff.). But the general improbability of the presence of Maccabæan Psalms in the Elohistic collection has already been pointed out, and there is nothing in the Psalms themselves to support this view. They speak of a signal Divine judgement supernaturally inflicted, rather than of victories won like those of Judas, not indeed without special help from God, but still by the valour of his soldiers.

The position of these Psalms is significant. Following as they do upon the urgent appeal of Ps. lxxiv, they supply an answer to it. "Remember," the compiler of the collection seems to say, "how in one supreme crisis God proved His power to help His people."

Psalm lxxv is cast into a vividly dramatic form, and speaks in a tone of prophetic authority.

i. The people address God with thanksgiving for the recent manifestation of His power on their behalf (1). God speaks in answer, assuring them that ever and anon at the fitting moment He exercises judgement: though all may seem confusion and men's hearts fail them, He maintains the order which He has established in the world (2, 3).

ii. Fortified by this Divine utterance, the Psalmist addresses the proud enemies of Israel, warning them against presumptuous boasting, for Israel looks to no human ally for help, but to God the judge, the sovereign arbiter of human destiny, Who holds in His hands the cup of judicial wrath to administer to those who resist His will (4—8).

iii. While the wicked are thus punished, Israel (on whose behalf the Psalmist speaks) will offer unceasing praise to God; confident that the

[1] Comp. lxxv. 1 with lxxvi. 1, the name of God; lxxv. 9 with lxxvi. 6, the God of Jacob: lxxv. 2, 7 with lxxvi. 8, 9; and the general tone of triumph and thanksgiving which pervades both.

power of the wicked will be utterly destroyed, and the righteous be brought to honour (9, 10).

Compare the Song of Hannah, 1 Sam. ii. 1—10. On the title, For the Chief Musician; set to Al tash'cheth. A Psalm of Asaph. a Song; see *Introd.* pp. xxi, xxvii, and Introd. to Ps. lvii.

To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, A Psalm *or* Song of Asaph.

75 Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, *unto thee* do we give thanks:
For *that* thy name *is* near thy wondrous works declare.

2 When I shall receive the congregation
I will judge uprightly.
3 The earth and all the inhabitants thereof *are* dissolved:

1. The theme of the Psalm: thanksgiving for the recent manifestation of God's presence and power among His people.

for that *thy name* is *near thy wondrous works declare*] The A.V., retained in R.V. marg., gives a good sense, but such a personification of God's wondrous works is without analogy, and elsewhere 'wondrous works' is always the object to 'declare' or similar verbs. Hence it is better to render with R.V.:

We give thanks unto thee, O God;
We give thanks, for thy name is near:
Men tell of thy wondrous works.

God's 'Name' is the compendious expression for His Being as it is revealed to men. Cp. the striking parallel in Isaiah's prediction of the coming judgement on the Assyrians (xxx. 27 ff.), a passage which should be carefully studied in connexion with this Psalm, "Behold the name of Jehovah cometh from far." Though God is always 'near' (Deut. iv. 7), yet in an especial sense He is 'near' when He manifests His presence (xxxiv. 18; cxlv. 18). *men tell* &c.] God's miracles of deliverance (ix. 1; lxxi. 17, note) are in every one's mouth.

2. 3. God speaks, as in xlvi. 10, and His words are virtually an answer to men's thoughts. Men may have thought that He had abdicated His function as Judge of all the earth: not so: He was only waiting for the fitting moment for action.

2. When I reach the appointed time,
I judge uprightly.

The 'appointed time' (cii. 13; Hab. ii. 3; Acts xvii. 31) is the proper moment foreordained in the Divine counsels and known to God. The intervention of Jehovah at the moment when the Assyrians are ripe for judgement is a favourite thought with Isaiah (x. 32, 33; xviii. 4, 5).

The second *I* is emphatic: *I*, whatever men may do; *I*, whatever men may think.

3. The first line virtually forms the protasis of the sentence: **Though**

I bear up the pillars of it. Selah.
I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly: 4
And to the wicked, Lift not up the horn:
Lift not up your horn on high: 5
Speak *not* with a stiff neck.
For promotion *cometh* neither from the east, 6
Nor from the west, nor from the south.

the earth &c.; I have set up the pillars of it. Though all the world is in terror and confusion, *I* (emphatic) have established a moral order in it. The material world is often compared to a building with its foundations and pillars (1 Sam. ii. 8; Job ix. 6; xxxviii. 4 ff.); and the moral world is described by the same figure. Cp. xi. 3; lxxxii. 5.

I bear up] Lit. *I have proportioned*, or, *adjusted by line and measure.* The rendering of R.V. marg., *When the earth...I set up*, will mean that when confusion reigns, God re-establishes order: but it is better to understand the perfect tense (*I have set up*) of the fundamental laws which God has from the first ordained.

4, 5. A warning to all presumptuous braggarts, based on the Divine utterances of *vv.* 2, 3. It is disputed whether the speaker is still God, as in *vv.* 2, 3, or the poet, but the latter alternative is preferable. The interposition of *Selah* marks the end of the Divine speech, and *I said* naturally introduces a fresh speaker. Moreover there is no break between *v.* 5 and *v.* 6, but it is clear that God is no longer speaking in *vv.* 6, 7.

4. I say unto the arrogant, Deal not arrogantly. Cp. lxxiii. 3; v. 5. Rabshakeh and his colleagues and the Assyrians in general were the very type of such boastful, defiant arrogance (Is. xxxvii. 23; x. 7 ff.; Nah. i. 11).

Lift not up the horn] A metaphor, derived from animals tossing their heads, to denote overweening, defiant self-consciousness of strength.

5. *speak* not *set a stiff neck*] Better, as R.V. marg., *Speak not insolently with a* haughty *neck.* Cp. 1 Sam. ii. 3; and for *neck* = *haughty neck*, see Job xv. 26. *Not* should not have been italicised in A.V. A single negative governs both clauses in the Heb. though our idiom requires its repetition. There is an interesting various reading in the LXX, "Speak not unrighteousness *against God.*" They read in their text the word for *Rock*, which differs by only one consonant from the word for *neck* (צור — צואר); and it is noteworthy that this title of God occurs in Is. xxx. 29. Cp. Hab. i. 12.

6—8. The reason for this warning. Israel looks to God alone for help, and He is the supreme arbiter of human destinies.

6. According to one reading of the Heb. text we must render,
For neither from the east, nor from the west,
Nor yet from the wilderness, (cometh) lifting up.

The wilderness, to the S. of Palestine, stands for the south: and the

7 But God *is* the judge:
He putteth down one, and setteth up another.
8 For in the hand of the LORD *there is* a cup, and the wine is red;
It is full *of* mixture; and he poureth out of the same:
But the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring *them* out, *and* drink *them*.
9 But I will declare for ever;
I will sing *praises* to the God of Jacob.
10 All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off;
But the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.

sense is, Exalt not yourselves, for exaltation comes from no quarter of the compass, but from God. But it is better to follow a slightly different reading, which is that of all the Ancient Versions except the Targum, and render the second line, Nor yet from the wilderness of mountains (cometh our help). The sentence is an aposiopesis, to be completed with words such as those of cxxi. 1, 2. Israel looks not to any quarter of the compass for human help, but to God alone. The North is not mentioned because the Assyrians were approaching from that quarter.

7. *the judge*] Cp. Is. xxxiii. 22.

setteth up] **Lifteth up.** Cp. 1 Sam. ii. 6, 7; Ps. cxlvii. 6.

8. The judgement is described under the figure of a cup of wine, which God gives the wicked to drink. The figure is a common one. See Jer. xxv. 15 ff., 27 ff.; xlix. 12; li. 7; Is. li. 17 ff.; Job xxi. 20; Ps. xi. 6; lx. 3. *is red*] **Or, foameth** (R.V.). *mixture*] Herbs and spices to make it more seductive and intoxicating.

but the dregs &c.] **Surely the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall drain up and drink.** They must drink the draught of God's wrath to the last drop. Cp. Is. li. 17. Rosenmüller quotes in illustration from an Arabic poet, "We gave the Hudheilites the cup of death to drink, whose dregs are confusion, disgrace, and shame."

9, 10. The vow of praise and the assurance of triumph.

9. **But as for me, I will declare for ever.** It is easy to supply 'thy wondrous works.' But the LXX reads (with change of one letter) *I will rejoice*, which may be right. Cp. ix. 14; Is. xxix. 19.

For ever may mean 'while life lasts' (1 Sam. i. 22): or is he speaking as the representative of the immortal people?

10. *will I cut off*] If the poet is the speaker, he speaks in the name of Israel, confident that in God's strength they will be able to complete the humiliation of their proud foes. Cp. Mic. iv. 13. But the speaker may be God, answering the vow of praise with a fresh promise. Cp. xlvi. 10. For the figure cp. Zech. i. 18 ff.

shall be exalted] **Shall be lifted up** (R.V.). Cp. 1 Sam. ii. 10. 'The righteous one' is Israel, righteous by contrast with the wicked Assyrians. Cp. Hab. i. 13.

PSALM LXXVI.

The occasion of this Psalm has already been discussed in the Introduction to Ps. lxxv. Its structure is clearly marked, and should be compared with that of Ps. xlvi. It consists of four stanzas of three verses each, the close of the first and third being marked by *Selah*.

i. God has once more revealed Himself in Zion, by shattering the power of the foes which assailed her (1—3).

ii. Triumphantly He returns from the scene of their discomfiture, where hero and warrior, chariot and horse, lie still in death (4—6).

iii. None can resist Him when He puts forth His power as Judge and Saviour (7—9).

iv. Man's opposition does but enhance His glory. Let Israel render due thanksgiving, and the neighbouring nations pay fitting homage, to Him Who subdues kings and princes at His will (10—12).

On the title, **For the chief Musician, on stringed instruments. A Psalm of Asaph. a Song**, see *Introd.* pp. xxi. xxiv. The LXX adds, as in Ps. lxxx, *with reference to the Assyrian.*

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm *or* Song of Asaph.

In Judah *is* God known: 76
His name *is* great in Israel.
In Salem also is his tabernacle, 2
And his dwelling place in Zion.
There brake he the arrows of the bow, 3
The shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah.

1—3. God has once more shewn His might in Zion by shattering the power of her assailants.

1. *known*] Lit., *one who is made Himself known.* By this recent deliverance He has once more "made Himself known in her palaces as a sure refuge" (xlviii. 3; cp. ix. 16; Is. xxxiii. 13).

his name is *great*] Cp. lxxv. 1; xlvii. 2; xlviii, 1, 10; lxxvii. 13.

Israel] The covenant name, denoting the people of God's choice. Now that the kingdom of Israel had fallen, Judah was the representative of the whole nation.

2. **And he hath set his pavilion in Salem,**
And his habitation in Zion.

For the words *pavilion* and *habitation* applied to the Temple see xxvii. 5; lxviii. 5. The words may however mean the *covert* and *lair* of a lion (x. 9; civ. 22; Am. iii. 4); and it is possible that the Psalmist intends to describe God as the lion of Judah, who has issued forth from His lair, and seized His prey. Cp. *v.* 4, and the simile in Is. xxxi. 4.

Salem is either an old name for Jerusalem (Gen. xiv. 18), or a poetical abbreviation. The name means 'unharmed,' 'at peace,' and it is doubtless used with allusion to the recent escape of Zion from destruction (Is. xxxiii. 20).

3. **There hath he broken the lightnings of the bow.** The destruc-

4 Thou *art* more glorious *and* excellent than the mountains of prey.
5 The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep:
And none of the men of might have found their hands.
6 At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob,
Both the chariot and horse *are* cast into a dead sleep.

tion of Sennacherib's army apparently took place at some distance from Jerusalem, but Jerusalem is naturally spoken of as the scene of God's action, because it was the seat of His presence (xlvi. 5 ff.) and it was on her behalf that He put forth His power.

For *broken* cp. xlvi. 9; Hos. ii. 18; Is. ix. 4; Jer. xlix. 35; and more generally, Is. xiv. 25. Arrows are called *lightnings* from the swiftness of their flight, rather than from any reference to fire-laden darts (vii. 13, note). *The battle* includes all instruments and equipments for war.

4—6. The manifestation of God's majesty in the discomfiture of the enemy.

4. A difficult verse. Two renderings are grammatically possible: either, **Illustrious art Thou, majestic, from the mountains of prey**: or, **more than the mountains of prey**. The second rendering however appears to involve an unsuitable comparison, whether *mountains of prey* is explained to mean the strongholds of the invaders, or as a metaphor for the invaders themselves, and the first rendering is certainly preferable. It describes God either as issuing forth from mount Zion to spoil the foe (lxviii. 35); or better, as a lion returning from the mountains where he has hunted his prey. Cp. Is. xiv. 25, "I will break the Assyrian in my land, and *upon my mountains* tread him under foot." The fierce lion of Assyria who "filled his caves with prey, and his dens with ravin" (Nah. ii. 11 ff.; iii. 1) had met his match.

The LXX has, *from the eternal mountains* (cp. Hab. iii. 6), a reading which is preferred by some commentators, and understood to mean the mountains of Zion, on which God has placed His throne.

The word rendered *majestic* (A.V. *excellent*) is applied to God in Is. x. 34: "Lebanon," the emblem of the Assyrians, "shall fall by *a majestic one*": Is. xxxiii. 21, "There Jehovah will be with us *in majesty*": cp. the cognate word in Ex. xv. 11, "*majestic in holiness.*"

5. *The stouthearted*] For illustration cp. Is. x. 12 ff.

are spoiled] Lit. *have let themselves be spoiled.* Cp. Is. xvii. 14; xxxiii. 1. *they have slept their sleep*] They slumber their (last) sleep, the sleep of death (Jer. li. 39, 57; Nah. iii. 18).

have found their hands] Their hands refused to act; their strength was paralysed; in spite of all their haughty boastings, Is. x. 10, 13, 14, 32.

6. *At thy rebuke*] Cp. ix. 5; xviii. 15; Is. xvii. 13.

are *cast into a dead sleep*] A word which denotes a deep, supernaturally caused slumber. It is usual to say that 'chariot and horse' stand by metonymy for charioteers and horsemen: but surely poetry imagines chariots as well as horses to be alive. The "pransing horses" and

Thou, *even* thou, *art* to be feared:
And who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?
Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven;
The earth feared, and was still,
When God arose to judgment,
To save all the meek of the earth. Selah.

Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee:
The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.
Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God:

the "resounding chariots" (Nah. ii. 3, 4; iii. 2), all the rush and roar of the battle, are still and silent as the grave. Cp. Is. xliii. 17.

7—9. It was the irresistible judgement of God.

7. *to be feared*] The same word as in *v.* 12, and in xlvii. 2.

who may stand] Cp. Nah. i. 6; Ps. i. 5; cxxx. 3.

8. *Thou didst cause judgement to be heard*] Or, as R.V., sentence. God pronounced sentence upon the proud Assyrian when He intervened for the rescue of His people. Cp. xlvi. 6; Is. xxx. 30; 1 Sam. ii. 10.

from heaven] For though God has chosen Zion for His earthly dwelling-place, His true abode and seat of judgement is in heaven.

the meek of the earth] Cp. Is. xi. 4; Zeph. ii. 3. Israel, regarded ideally as 'the righteous one' (lxxv. 10), and contrasted with 'the wicked of the earth' (lxxv. 8), is meant.

10—12. The lessons of judgement.

10. *the wrath of man shall praise thee*] All rebellion against God's will must in the end redound to God's glory: it serves to set His sovereignty in a clearer light (Ex. ix. 16). Excellently the P.B.V., 'shall turn to thy praise.'

the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain] All that will not submit shall be subdued. The sense is good, but it is very doubtful if the verb can bear this meaning. Hence R.V., The residue of wrath shalt thou gird upon thee. But whose wrath is meant? Surely it cannot be God's wrath, with which He girds Himself to complete the destruction of the foe, for the reference of *wrath* in the two clauses of the verse to different persons is awkward, and it is difficult to see what can be meant by the *residue* of God's wrath. Rather it must be, as in the preceding line, man's wrath that is meant. God girds on Himself as an ornament the last futile efforts of human wrath, turning them to His own honour: or girds them on as a sword, making the wrath of His enemies to minister to their final discomfiture. Cp. Is. xxxiii. 11, "Your spirit (i.e. wrath) is a fire which shall devour you." The peculiar rendering of the LXX, "shall keep festival unto thee," may however point to a different reading, meaning, *shall honour thee*. The P.B.V. 'the fierceness *of them*' is a misprint for *of other*, the original rendering of the Great Bible. See Driver, *Par. Psalter*, p. xviii.

Let all that be round about him bring presents unto him
that ought to be feared.
12 He shall cut off the spirit of princes:
He is terrible to the kings of the earth.

11. Let Israel pay the vows it made in its hour of peril (lxvi. 13); let the nations that dwell near God's city and people bring their present —a phrase used only of bringing solemn tribute to God (lxviii. 29; Is. xviii. 7). "Many," we read in 2 Chron. xxxii. 23, "brought gifts unto Jehovah to Jerusalem," after the great deliverance.

unto him that ought to be feared] Lit. *unto the fear*, the same word as in Is. viii. 13.

12. *He shall cut off*] Cp. the simile in Is. xviii. 4, 5, describing how Jehovah will destroy the plans of the Assyrians just as they are coming to maturity: and Rev. xiv. 18, 19.

the spirit of princes] Their pride and fury. Cp. Is. xxxiii. 11.

the kings of the earth] Cp. xlviii. 4.

PSALM LXXVII.

This Psalm breathes the spirit of Habakkuk, and uses language closely resembling that of his 'Prayer.' As Habakkuk watched the advance of the Chaldeans, and foresaw that they were to be the executioners of God's judgement upon Judah, his faith was tried to the uttermost. Could such an apparent triumph of pride and violence be consistent with the Divine government of the world? His questionings were answered with the assurance that pride and injustice must inevitably come to ruin, while righteousness endures; but the assurance was coupled with the warning that its realisation might be long delayed. And when the prophet prayed that God would hasten His work lest the delay should prove too great a strain for the faith of His waiting people, in place of a direct answer there rose before his mind the vision of God's Advent to judge His enemies and redeem His people. That Advent he describes in language borrowed from the great deliverances and visitations of the past, conveying the same fundamental idea as that of this Psalm, that Israel's past is the pledge for Israel's future[1].

When the Psalmist wrote, the blow had fallen. Israel was in exile. It is clearly no merely private and personal sorrow which overwhelms his spirit, but the apparent rejection of Israel by God. But in the light of Israel's past history he is taught to believe that this rejection cannot be permanent. In the recollection of that marvellous past he finds the ground of hope for the future. The God who led His people out of the bondage of Egypt can bring them back from their Exile in Babylon.

The structure of the Psalm is regular. There are two main divisions, in each of which there are two stanzas, marked off by *Selah*. The second

[1] For fuller explanation of Habakkuk's magnificent ode I may refer to my *Doctrine of the Prophets*, pp. 281 ff.

and third stanzas fall into equal subdivisions of three verses. In the fourth stanza the rhythm changes; instead of six distichs we have four tristichs; but the number of lines is the same. The last verse stands by itself as the conclusion.

i. The problem.

1. Introduction. The Psalmist relates how in the day of distress he strove, but in vain, to find comfort in prayer (1—3).

2. In the watches of the night he pondered on the past history of Israel (4—6), and asked himself whether God could have irrevocably rejected His people (7—9).

ii. The solution.

3. The answer to such questionings must, he feels, be looked for in God's revelation of Himself in history (10—12), especially in His redemption of Israel out of Egypt (13—15).

4. On the grandeur of that manifestation he dwells at length (16—19).

In conclusion he points to God's guidance of His people through the wilderness (20).

Some commentators regard *vv.* 16—19 as a fragment of another Psalm, mainly on the ground of the change of rhythm, and a supposed want of connexion with what precedes and follows. But though the rhythm changes, tristichs taking the place of distichs, the length of the stanza is the same—twelve lines—as that of the two preceding ones. The first stanza contains a tristich (*v.* 2), and it should be noted that *vv.* 1 and 16 are both marked by the figure of 'epanaphora' or rhetorical repetition.

Attention has also been called to the abruptness of the close of the Psalm, and it has been suggested that it is either incomplete or mutilated. But this abruptness is a mark of the poet's skill. He ends with the thought which he would leave impressed on the reader's mind for his consolation—God's providential guidance of His people. Any addition would weaken the effect. The reader is left to draw the inference that God's guidance will continue, and that, as He redeemed Israel from the bondage of Egypt, He can redeem them from exile in Babylon. The parallel between the Exodus from Babylon and the Exodus from Egypt is constantly present to the minds of the prophets.

The resemblance of the Psalm to the Prayer of Habakkuk has already been referred to. It has been much disputed whether the Psalmist is imitating the Prophet, or the Prophet the Psalm. On literary grounds alone it would be difficult to decide, though the presumption is perhaps in favour of the originality of Habakkuk. But if (as I believe) the Prayer of Habakkuk is an integral part of his book, not a later addition, and if the Psalm belongs to the time of the Exile, the Psalmist must be the borrower.

Compare, besides Hab. iii, Ex. xv; and Pss. cxlii. 1—3; cxliii. 4—6.

To the chief Musician, to Jeduthun, A Psalm of Asaph.

77 I cried unto God *with* my voice,
Even unto God *with* my voice; and he gave ear unto me.
2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord:
My sore ran in the night, and ceased not:
My soul refused to be comforted.
3 I remembered God, and was troubled:
I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah.

On the title, **For the chief Musician**; after the manner of Jeduthun (R.V.), see Introd. to Ps. lxii.

1—3. The Psalmist relates how, under the pressure of calamity, he could find no consolation even in prayer.

1. **"Aloud unto God let me cry,**
Yea, aloud unto God, and he will give ear to me."
2. **(Thus) in the day of my distress I sought the Lord:**
My hand was stretched out in the night, and slacked not;
My soul refused to be comforted.
3. **When I would fain remember God, I was disquieted:**
When I would fain muse in prayer, my spirit fainted.

The precise force of the tenses of the original is difficult to determine. The perfects in *v.* 2, and again in *vv.* 4, 5, however, shew that the poet is relating a past experience. In *v.* 1 he quotes, as it were, the words in which, in that hour of sorrow, he resolved to betake himself to prayer, and in *v.* 3, in tenses which recall the emotion of the time, though their force can hardly be given in a translation, he describes his failure to find comfort.

In its rendering *my sore ran*, the A.V. follows Jewish authorities in taking *hand* in the sense of *blow* or *wound* (Job xxiii. 2). 'My wound was unstanched,' is a metaphor for 'my sorrow was unrelieved.' But the rendering of R.V. given above is preferable. He sought God day and night, with hands unceasingly outstretched in the attitude of prayer (xxviii. 2, note; Ex. xvii. 11, 12). The text however is doubtful. The verb which means literally 'was poured out,' is not a natural one to apply to the hand; and the use of the same verb, and substantives derived from the root of the verb rendered 'slacked,' in Lam. ii. 18, 19; iii. 49, with reference to tears, suggests that the original reading may have been, 'Mine *eye* poured down in the night, and slacked not.' So the Targ.

my soul &c.] Like Jacob, mourning for the loss of Joseph (Gen. xxxvii. 35); and Rachel, weeping for her children (Jer. xxxi. 15).

3. For the word rendered 'disquieted' cp. xlii. 5, 11; xliii. 5. In lv. 17 it is joined with that rendered 'muse in prayer,' which recurs in *vv.* 6 *b*, 12 *b*, and denotes meditation, musing prayer, musing or plaintive speech.

my spirit &c.] Cp. cxlii. 3; cxliii. 4, in contexts full of parallels to this Psalm.

Thou holdest mine eyes waking:
I am *so* troubled that I cannot speak.
I have considered the days of old,
The years of ancient times.
I call to remembrance my song in the night:
I commune with mine own heart:
And my spirit made diligent search.
Will the Lord cast off for ever?
And will he be favourable no more?

1—9. In the vigils of the night he pondered on the history of the past, and asked himself with earnest questionings whether it were possible that God could have utterly cast off His people, and changed His character as a gracious and merciful God.

4. Thou holdest open the lids of mine eyes:
I was perplexed, and could not speak.
5. I considered the days of old,
The years of ages past, (saying),
6. "Let me remember my song in the night:
Let me muse in my heart;"
And my spirit inquired, (saying),
7. "For age after age will the Lord cast off?
And will he not once again shew favour?"

4. The word rendered *waking* in A.V., *watching* in R.V., probably means the *guards* or *lids* of the eyes. The general sense is clear. In his agony of sorrow he was sleepless and speechless: it was God who withheld sleep from his eyes. He was 'troubled,' perplexed and agitated (Gen. xli. 8; Dan. ii. 3) by the riddle of Israel's present rejection and humiliation, and in this perplexity he pondered (*v.* 5) on the glorious record of God's mercies to His people in the days of old.

5. "Not pathetic only but profound also and of the most solid substance was that reply made by an old Carthusian monk to the trifler who asked him how he had managed to get through his life:—*Cogitavi dies antiquos, et annos aeternos in mente habui.*"

6. In the first two lines he tells us how he bade himself recall the songs of thanksgiving which he had once been able to sing in the night, the quiet time of meditation and thanksgiving (xlii. 8; xcii. 2; Job xxxv. 10), in contrast to his present cries of anguish or silence of despair.

Song means literally 'song to the accompaniment of stringed instruments.' P.B.V. 'and search out my spirits,' follows the reading of the LXX and some other Ancient Versions.

7. The emphasis is on *for ever*; lit. *for ages* to come, which are compared with the ages past (*v.* 5); a different word from that in *v.* 8, and lxxiv. 1. Cp. lxxxv. 5.

For 'shew favour,' cp. xliv. 3; li. 18; lxxxv. 1; cvi. 4.

8 Is his mercy clean gone for ever?
Doth *his* promise fail for evermore?
9 Hath God forgotten to be gracious?
Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah.

10 And I said, This *is* my infirmity:
But I will remember the years of the right hand of the most
High.
11 I will remember the works of the LORD:
Surely I will remember thy wonders of old.

8. **Is his lovingkindness at an end for ever?**
Hath his promise failed for all generations?

Cp. lxxxv. 5; cv. 8.

9. Has He forgotten or deliberately abandoned those attributes which He once proclaimed as the essence of His Nature (Ex. xxxiv. 6)? Cp. Hab. iii. 2, "In wrath wilt thou remember mercy."

10—20. The history of the past is the most convincing answer to these questions, the best cordial for his fainting spirits. Cp. Is. lxiii. 7 ff.

10—15. The Psalmist resolves to recall the exhibition of God's character in the deliverance of His people from Egypt.

10. *And I said* introduces the argument by which the Psalmist thrusts aside the possibility of an affirmative answer to his questionings. But the rest of the verse is obscure, and has been very variously explained. The precise sense of the word rendered *my infirmity* is doubtful; and in the second line the word *sh'nōth* may mean *years*, or, *changing*. If the rendering *years* is adopted, the verb *I will remember* must be supplied from *v.* 11. Two explanations deserve consideration.

(i) *This* apparent desertion of Israel by God *is my suffering*, and I must bear it (cp. Jer. x. 19); but for my consolation I will recall *the years of the right hand of the Most High*, "the years of ages past" (*v.* 5), in which the sovereign power of the Ruler of the world was put forth on behalf of His people.

(ii) *It is my weakness* which prompts these questionings. *To think that the right hand of the Most High doth change!* that His power can ever grow feeble (Is. l. 2) or His will change (Mal. iii. 6)!

The explanation, 'This is what grieveth me, that the right hand of the Most High doth change,' is untenable, for *v.* 10 clearly introduces the answer to his doubts.

The authority of the Ancient Versions is in favour of taking *sh'nōth* in the sense of *change*[1], but on the other hand the first explanation retains the sense in which the word has already occurred in *v.* 5.

11. I will make mention of the deeds of Jah;
Yea, I will remember thy wonders of old.

[1] The Targ. however gives alternative renderings.

I will meditate also of all thy work,
And talk of thy doings.
Thy way, O God, *is* in the sanctuary:
Who *is so* great a God as *our* God?
Thou *art* the God that doest wonders:
Thou hast declared thy strength among the people
Thou hast with *thine* arm redeemed thy people,
The sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.

The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid:
The depths also were troubled.

The A.V. *remember* follows the *Qrê*; the R.V. *make mention* is the reading of the *Kthîbh*. Cp. Is. lxiii. 7.

The name *Jah* recalls the deliverance from Egypt (Ex. xv. 2; cp. Ps. lxviii. 4), the greatest of all God's wonderful works.

12. **I will meditate also upon all thy work,**
And muse on thy doings. (R.V.)

For *work* cp. Hab. iii. 2.

13. *in the sanctuary*] Better, **in holiness**. Cp. Ex. xv. 11. All the plan and method of God's dealings in the world moves in the sphere of holiness, separate from all sin and imperfection, in accord with the perfection of His Nature. Cp. Habakkuk's appeal to God's holiness (i. 12.)

who &c.] **Who is a great god** (*El*) **like God** (*Elohim*)? For *Elohim* no doubt originally stood *Jehovah* as in the passage of Moses' song, which the Psalmist has in mind (Ex. xv. 11).

14. *Thou* art *the God* &c.] The true **El**, the living, Almighty God (v. 4; xlii. 2). The epithet *that doest wonders* is borrowed from Ex. xv. 11. Cp. Is. xxv. 1.

thou hast declared &c.] Render, **Thou didst make known thy strength among the peoples**. Cp. Ex. xv. 13, 14; ix. 16.

15. *Thou hast* &c.] With a (strong) **arm didst thou redeem thy people.** Cp. Ex. xv. 13, 16; vi. 6; Ps. lxxiv. 2.

the sons of Jacob and Joseph] According to the Targum, Joseph is named because, by preserving the lives of his brethren in Egypt, he became as it were a second father of the nation. But more probably Joseph is named as the father of Ephraim and Manasseh, the ancestors of the most powerful tribes of the Northern Kingdom. Cp. lxxviii. 67; lxxx. 1; lxxxi. 5. In Amos (v. 6, 15; vi. 6) *Joseph* denotes the Northern Kingdom. In Obad. 18, *the house of Jacob and the house of Joseph* stands for the whole nation. Cp. Zech. x. 6; Ezek. xxxvii. 16. 19; xlvii. 13; xlviii. 32.

16—19. The manifestation of God's sovereignty over nature in that supreme act of redemption.

16. The waters and depths of the Red Sea are personified, as though they were conscious of the presence of their Creator and Lord. Cp.

17 The clouds poured out water:
The skies sent out a sound:
Thine arrows also went abroad.
18 The voice of thy thunder *was* in the heaven:
The lightnings lightened the world:
The earth trembled and shook.
19 Thy way *is* in the sea,
And thy path in the great waters,
And thy footsteps are not known.
20 Thou leddest thy people like a flock
By the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Hab. iii. 10, "The mountains saw thee, they were afraid": and Ps. cxiv. 3; Ex. xv. 5, 8. We miss in translation the pictorial force of the Heb. tenses: lit. they are afraid, the depths also tremble.

17. God came in storm and earthquake. So the poet develops the thought of Ex. xiv. 24, 25. Cp. Ps. xviii. 7 ff.; xcvii. 3 ff.; and the parallel passage in Hab. iii. 10, 11, where *tempest* (R.V.) is the cognate substantive to the verb rendered *poured out* here.

sent out a sound] Better (cp. Hab.), uttered a voice, i.e. thundered. God's arrows are the flashes of lightning.

18. *in the heaven*] The word *galgal*, derived from a root meaning *to roll*, was understood by the Jewish commentators to mean the *vault* or *circuit* of the heaven. More probably it should be rendered in the whirlwind (R.V.), or, with rumbling, the rolling of the thunder being conceived of as the rolling of God's chariot wheels. Cp. Hab. iii. 8.

19. **Thy way was in the sea,**
And thy paths in the great waters,
And thy footsteps were not known. (R.V.)

Cp. Hab. iii. 15. The A.V. *path* follows the *Qrî*; R.V. *paths* the *Kthîbh* and the Ancient Versions. The sea flowed back where Israel passed, and no visible trace of God's victorious march was left:—a parable of His method of working. Cp. Job xxiii. 8 ff.

20. Conclusion. The convulsions of nature were the heralds of deliverance (Luke xxi. 28), and the Shepherd of Israel led forth His flock under the guidance of His chosen servants. Cp. Ex. xv. 13: Ps. lxxviii. 52 ff.; lxxiv. 1, note. The words of the last line come from Num. xxxiii. 1; cp. Mic. vi. 4; Is. lxiii. 11 ff.

PSALM LXXVIII.

In Ps. lxxvii the poet recalls God's wonderful works of old for the encouragement of his faith in the hour of distress. In this Psalm he invites his hearers to draw a lesson of warning for themselves from the past history of the nation. Again and again Israel had forgotten the great works which Jehovah had done for them, and with base ingratitude

and short-memoried faithlessness had rebelled against His government, or tempted Him by distrust of His goodness. The Psalmist holds up the picture to his contemporaries, in the hope that they may be taught to avoid repeating the sins of their forefathers.

Though the Psalm refers to the behaviour of the whole nation, Ephraim (if the text of v. 9 is sound) seems to be singled out at the outset as especially guilty; and the Psalm concludes with the choice of Zion as the seat of the sanctuary and David as the king of Israel, in a way which indicates that the writer had some reason for dwelling upon the position of Jerusalem and the Davidic kingdom as the special objects of Jehovah's favour. But the rebuke of Ephraim is not the main purpose of the Psalm. Its intention is evidently positive, to draw warnings for the present and the future from the consideration of the past.

It is impossible to fix the date of the Psalm with any certainty. That the history is brought down to the time of David and no further does not prove that it was written then. It presumes the existence of the Temple (*v.* 69), and apparently the separation of the kingdoms. It has been said that "the didactic use of past history is in itself decisive against a pre-Exile date," and that "it would be foolish to separate it from Pss. cv—cvii." But the didactic use of past history is to be found in the earliest prophets; and though Pss. cv, cvi belong to the same class of historical Psalms, it does not necessarily follow that they all belong to the same period. There are some remarkable differences, and Pss. cv—cvii contain clear allusions to the Captivity, which this Psalm does not. *V.* 69 speaks of the Temple in language which makes it difficult to suppose that it had already been destroyed. Moreover it is at least noteworthy, that the Psalmist refers to those plagues only which are described in the Jehovistic narrative in Exodus (J), and according to a very probable reading and explanation of *v.* 48, to all of them. He does not refer to the plague of darkness described in the Elohistic narrative (E) only, nor to the plagues of lice and boils described only in the Priestly code (P). Of course the poet was not bound to mention every plague, but it is a not unnatural inference that he was familiar with J only, while it was still in circulation as a separate work. If so, the Psalm must have been written at a relatively early date. On the other hand the use of the title "the Holy One of Israel" (*v.* 41) indicates that it is not earlier than the time of Isaiah, who originated this title to express the truth revealed to him in the vision of his Call. It may however belong to that period, and may have been written in view of the hostility of the Northern Kingdom to Judah (Is. vii, viii), or more probably in view of the fall of the Northern Kingdom, as a warning to Judah to beware lest, though Zion was the city of God's choice, and the house of David chosen to rule His people, they too, like Shiloh and Ephraim, might be rejected. At such a time moreover the thought of the divine choice of Jerusalem might naturally be offered as a ground of hope and confidence.

The Psalm falls for the most part into stanzas of eight and sixteen verses. *Vv.* 17, 18; 40, 41; 56, 57, form a kind of initial refrain, in which the dominant idea of the Psalm, —Israel's rebellion and temptation of God—is repeated and emphasised. The Psalmist does not follow the

historical order of events, but relates first the care of Jehovah for Israel and Israel's ingratitude towards Jehovah in the wilderness (12—39), and then the miracles of the Exodus and the settlement in Canaan (40 ff.).

i. The purpose of the Psalm stated;—to draw warning and instruction for the present from the past history of Israel, by recapitulating its course and enforcing its lessons in accordance with the divine command, that the ingratitude and unfaithfulness of the past might not be repeated (1—8).

ii. Israel's history had been a strange record of forgetfulness and disloyalty to the God Who had brought them out of Egypt and provided for their wants in the wilderness with loving care (9—16).

iii. In spite of His care they rebelled against Him and tempted Him by doubting His power and goodness, so that even while He provided for their wants He was forced to punish them for their sin (17—31).

iv. The chastisements of the wilderness produced only temporary and superficial amendment, and it was due to God's forbearance that they were not utterly destroyed (32—39).

v. It was no momentary aberration, but repeated and defiant rebellion, in utter forgetfulness of all that they owed to Jehovah for redeeming them from the bondage of Egypt. The Psalmist relates the wonders which accompanied their deliverance, in order to set Israel's ingratitude in the strongest light. Jehovah destroyed their enemies, and brought them safely into the land which He had prepared for them (40—55).

vi. But there again they tempted God and rebelled against Him, till He forsook His dwelling-place in Shiloh, and abandoned them to their enemies (56—64).

vii. Yet once more He had mercy on them, and when He delivered them from their enemies, He chose Judah instead of Ephraim, Zion in place of Shiloh, and appointed David to be the shepherd of His people (65—72).

Comp. generally, besides Pss. cv, cvi, Deut. xxxii.

Maschil of Asaph.

78 Give ear, O my people, to my law:
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

On the title, *Maschil of Asaph*, see *Introd.* p. xix.

1—8. The Psalmist's solemn invitation to his countrymen to listen to his teaching. He proposes to set forth the lessons to be drawn from Israel's past history, in obedience to God's command to hand on the tradition of His mighty works for the encouragement and warning of each successive generation.

1, 2. Cp. the opening of Ps. xlix, noting that while there 'all peoples' are addressed, in accordance with the wider scope of the teaching of the 'Wise Men,' here Israel is addressed in the spirit of prophecy. It was the function of prophecy to interpret the past, as

I will open my mouth in a parable:
I will utter dark sayings of old:
Which we have heard and known,
And our fathers have told us.
We will not hide *them* from their children,
Shewing to the generation to come
The praises of the LORD, and his strength,

well as to foretell the future. *my law*] Rather, **my teaching**, as in Prov. i. 8, and often. See note on i. 2.

2. On the words *parable* and *dark sayings* or *enigmas* see note on xlix. 4. The Psalmist has no mere narrative of facts to recount, but a history full of significance for those who can penetrate its hidden meaning. It is a 'parable' not for Israel only, but for every individual in the Christian Church. *dark sayings of old*] Lessons drawn from the history of ancient times, from the Exodus, when Israel was 'born' as a nation, onward. Cp. lxxvii. 5.

This verse is freely quoted by St Matthew (xiii. 34, 35), in a form which does not agree exactly either with the Heb. or with the LXX, with reference to our Lord's teaching in parables. "All these things spake Jesus in parables unto the multitudes; and without a parable spake he nothing unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet, saying,

I will open my mouth in parables;
I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world."

The words of the Psalmist are not a direct prophecy of the Messiah's method of teaching; but just as Christ as perfect Man summed up in Himself and fulfilled the manifold experiences of the people of God, so as the perfect Teacher He adopted the methods of the teachers of the old dispensation, and 'fulfilled' them by carrying them to their highest perfection. As the Psalmist used the facts of Israel's history to convey the lesson which he desired to teach, so Christ used the phenomena of Nature and the experiences of Life. Cp. *Introd.* pp. lxxix f..

3, 4. It is best to place a full stop at the end of *v.* 2, and connect *vv.* 3, 4 thus:

The things which we have heard and known,
And our fathers have told to us,
We will not hide from their sons,
Telling to another generation the praises of Jehovah,
And his strength and his wondrous works that he hath done.

With line 2 cp. xliv. 1; Judg. vi. 13.

'From *our* sons' might have been expected rather than 'from *their* sons': but the pronoun *their* is significant. It implies that the trust was committed to the speakers by their ancestors not for themselves only but for future generations. Excellently Keble:

"The tale our fathers used to tell
We to their children owe."

And his wonderful works that he hath done.

5 For he established a testimony in Jacob,
And appointed a law in Israel,
Which he commanded our fathers,
That *they* should make them known to their children:
6 That the generation to come might know *them*, *even* the children *which* should be born;
Who should arise and declare *them* to their children:
7 That they might set their hope in God,
And not forget the works of God,
But keep his commandments:
8 And might not be as their fathers,
A stubborn and rebellious generation;
A generation *that* set not their heart aright,
And whose spirit was not stedfast with God.

The praises of Jehovah are His praiseworthy acts. Cp. xxii. 3, 30, 31. For *wondrous works* see note on lxxi. 17. Cp. cxlv. 4 ff.

5. *a testimony...a law*] Not the Mosaic legislation generally, but the express precept which enjoined upon Israelite parents the duty of teaching their children the great facts of Israel's history, that the remembrance of them might be handed down from generation to generation. See Ex. x. 2; xii. 26, 27; xiii. 8 ff., 14; Deut. iv. 9; vi. 20 ff. Cp. in the N.T. 2 Tim. ii. 2.

that they *should make them known*] *Them* refers to "the things which we have heard and known" &c., *vv.* 3, 4. Cp. Deut. iv. 9.

6. The A.V. follows the Massoretic division of the verse; but it is better to connect the clauses thus:

That another generation might know,
That sons which should be born might arise and tell their sons.

7. *their hope*] Or, **their confidence**, as Prov. iii. 26.

and not forget] "Lest thou forget" is the constantly recurring warning in Deuteronomy (iv. 9, &c.).

the works of God] Or, as R.V. in lxxvii. 11, **the deeds of God.**

8. *as their fathers*] Primarily, the generation of the wandering in the wilderness; but the warning was true for almost every age.

stubborn and rebellious] Epithets applied in Deut. xxi. 18 to the son, whom no admonition or chastisement would reform, and for whom accordingly nothing remained but the penalty of death. Cp. Jer. v. 23; Deut. ix. 7 ff.; xxxi. 27; xxxii. 5, 20.

that *set not their heart aright*] Failed to direct and prepare it with stedfast purpose to serve God. Cp. *v.* 37.

whose spirit was not steadfast] Better, as in *v.* 37, **was not faithful.** Fickleness, instability, untrustworthiness, were the characteristics of Israel's conduct.

The children of Ephraim, *being* armed, *and* carrying bows,
Turned *back* in the day of battle.
They kept not the covenant of God,
And refused to walk in his law;
And forgat his works,
And his wonders that he had shewed them.
Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers,
In the land of Egypt, *in* the field of Zoan.

9—16. Israel's disobedience and ingratitude, in spite of all God's mercies to them at the Exodus and in the wilderness.

9. This verse presents serious difficulties. (1) It seems to speak of some well-known act of cowardice on the part of the Ephraimites. But why should cowardice in war be censured, when it is disloyalty to God of which the Psalmist is speaking? It has been suggested that it refers to the slackness of Ephraim in prosecuting the conquest of Canaan (Judg. i), regarded as shewing their distrustfulness of God, in view of all the mighty works that He had done for them in the past. But it seems better to understand it figuratively (cp. *v.* 57), to mean that the Ephraimites were like cowards who flee in battle, and failed to fight for the cause of God. (2) Why are the Ephraimites particularly named, when the context refers to all Israel? Possibly to point forward to the rejection of Ephraim and choice of Judah which is the climax of the Psalm (*v.* 67). *vv.* 10, 11 must then be taken with *v.* 9, as a literal description of the disobedience and unfaithfulness of the Ephraimites.

After all attempts to explain it, the verse remains obscure, and many commentators suppose that it is an interpolation or that the text is in some way corrupt. The absence of parallelism and rhythm casts some suspicion on it independently; and it may possibly have been a gloss suggested by *v.* 57, and inserted here as an illustration of Israel's want of stedfastness (*v.* 8). *v.* 10 would follow naturally on *v.* 8, introducing the description of the rebellious generation, whose conduct is held up to reprobation for the admonition of their descendants.

10. *the covenant of God*] See Ex. xix. 5; xxiv. 3, 7, 8.

11. **And they forgat his doings,**
And his wondrous works that he had shewed them (R.V.).

12. **In the sight of their fathers he did wonders.** Cp. lxxvii. 14.

in *the field of Zoan*] Zoan, known to the Greeks as Tanis, was situated on the E. bank of the Tanitic branch of the Nile. It was famous as the capital of the Hyksos dynasty, and was refounded by Ramses II, the Pharaoh of the oppression. It is described by Mr Petrie, who excavated it in 1883–4, as "a city which was only inferior to the other capitals—Thebes and Memphis—in the splendour of its sculptures." The phrase "field of Zoan" for the district in which it was situated has been found in an Egyptian inscription.

After this brief allusion to the plagues, of which he intends to speak in detail afterwards (43 ff.), the Psalmist passes on at once to the Exodus and the journey through the wilderness.

13 He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through;
And he made the waters to stand as a heap.
14 In the daytime also he led them with a cloud,
And all the night with a light of fire.
15 He clave the rocks in the wilderness,
And gave *them* drink as *out of* the great depths.
16 He brought streams also out of the rock,
And caused waters to run down like rivers.

17 And they sinned yet more against him
By provoking the most High in the wilderness.
18 And they tempted God in their heart

13. *He divided the sea*] Lit. clave, as in *v.* 15; the word which is used in Ex. xiv. 16; Is. lxiii. 12; Neh. ix. 11.

as an heap] Cp. Ex. xv. 8; Ps. xxxiii. 7.

14. And he led them with the cloud by day (cp. Ex. xiii. 21), as a shepherd leads his flock (*v.* 53; lxxvii. 20).

15, 16. **He clave rocks in the wilderness,**
And gave them drink as out of the depths abundantly:
And he brought forth streams out of a cliff.

Two different words are used, with reference to the two occasions upon which the Israelites were miraculously supplied with water: first in Rephidim at the beginning of their journey when Moses was commanded to smite 'the rock' (Ex. xvii. 6), and secondly, in Kadesh, at the close of their wanderings, when Moses smote 'the cliff,' to which he was commanded to speak (Num. xx. 8 ff.). *The depths* are the reservoirs of water hidden in the earth (xxxiii. 7; Gen. vii. 11; Deut. viii. 7).

17—31. In spite of these miracles of mercy they sinned yet more, and tempted God in their unbelief, so that while He supplied their wants He was compelled to punish them for their sin. The order is logical not chronological. The first murmurings for food (Ex. xvi) preceded the giving of the water: and the narratives of Ex. xvi and Num. xi are fused into one.

17. **Yet went they on still to sin against him,**
Rebelling against the Most High in the land of drought.

Both the occasions referred to in *vv.* 15, 16 were connected with murmuring. The names of *Massah* and *Meribah* preserved the memory of Israel's sin in tempting God and striving with Him. And to these sins they added other sins. Note how the words 'rebel' and 'tempt' recur like a refrain at the beginning of each division of the Psalm (*vv.* 17, 18; 40, 41; 56). Cp. xcv. 9; cvi. 7, 14, 33, 43; Ex. xvii. 2, 7; Num. xiv. 22; xx. 10, 24; Deut. i. 26, 43; vi. 16; ix. 23; xxxiii. 8; &c. The two words sum up Israel's behaviour: they rebelled against God by constant disobedience to His revealed Will; they tempted Him, by sceptical doubts of His goodness, and insolent demands that He should prove His power.

By asking meat for their lust.
Yea, they spake against God; they said,
Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?
Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out,
And the streams overflowed;
Can he give bread also?
Can he provide flesh for his people?
Therefore the LORD heard *this*, and was wroth:
So a fire was kindled against Jacob,
And anger also came up against Israel;
Because they believed not in God,
And trusted not in his salvation:
Though he had commanded the clouds from above,
And opened the doors of heaven,
And had rained down manna upon them to eat,
And had given them *of* the corn of heaven.

18. *by asking* &c.] By asking food for their appetite: a different word from that rendered *lust* in *v.* 30. The allusion is not to the demand for flesh, but to the doubt whether God could provide food for the people at all (Ex. xvi. 2 ff.). In the verses which follow, the murmurings which preceded the first sending of manna and quails (Ex. xvi) are fused with those which preceded the second sending of quails (Num. xi).

19. *Can God furnish*] R.V., **Can God prepare?**

20. *can he provide*] R.V., **Will he provide?** The narrative is thrown into a graphic poetical form. Unbelief reaches its climax in the words *for his people*. If, as He says, we are His people, let Him provide, and provide literally, for our wants. *Bread...flesh*, as in Ex. xvi. 8, 12.

21. **Therefore when Jehovah heard, he was wroth:**
And a fire was kindled against Jacob,
And anger also went up against Israel.

Cp. *vv.* 59. 62. *A fire* alludes to the punishment of the murmuring Israelites by the burning at Taberah (Num. xi. 1 ff.), before the second giving of quails.

Went up is a metaphor from smoke. Cp. xviii. 8; lxxiv. 1.

22. For a moment they had believed (Ex. xiv. 31), but they soon fell away. Cp. Num. xiv. 11, a verse which might serve as a motto for this Psalm. *his salvation*] Of which they had had such marvellous proof in the Exodus (Ex. xiv. 13; xv. 2).

23. **Yet he commanded the skies above,**
And opened the doors of heaven;

24. **And he rained down manna upon them to eat,**
And gave them the corn of heaven.

25. **Everyone did eat the bread of the mighty,**
He sent them provision to the full.

25 Man did eat angels' food:
He sent them meat to the full.
26 He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven:
And by his power he brought in the south wind.
27 He rained flesh also upon them as dust,
And feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea:
28 And he let *it* fall in the midst of their camp,
Round about their habitations.

The A.V. rendering of the verbs in *vv.* 23, 24 as pluperfects is contrary to the rules of Hebrew grammar. The connexion of thought is that God was wroth at the unbelief of the Israelites, and yet He provided for their wants. The Psalmist does not follow the order of time in his recital, but combines the different murmurings, and then the different provisions of manna and quails.

The doors of heaven, as of some vast storehouse: cp. 'the windows (or 'flood-gates') of heaven,' 2 Kings vii. 2, 19; Mal. iii. 10. The Psalmist closely follows the language of Exodus xvi. 4, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you." Cp. cv. 40; John vi. 31.

Corn of heaven may allude to the granular form of the manna (Ex. xvi. 31).

Angels' food (LXX. Vulg., Syr.) is probably a right paraphrase of the words *the bread of the mighty*, though the term is nowhere applied to the angels. But cp. ciii. 20. Wisd. xvi. 20, "Thou feddest thine own people with angels' food," naturally follows the LXX. It is a question whether we should render '*Everyone* did eat' &c. cp. Ex. xvi. 16, 18, 21; or *man*, as contrasted with angels: cp. the Targ. "The sons of men ate bread which came down from the dwelling of the angels': but the former is probably right. For *to the full* cp. Ex. xvi. 3, 8, 12.

26. He led forth the east wind in the heaven:
And by his power he guided the south wind:
27. And he rained flesh upon them as the dust,
And winged fowl as the sand of the seas.

The sending of quails is connected, as in Ex. xvi. with the sending of the manna; but the language of the Psalm follows the description of the second sending of quails in Num. xi.

The verbs in *v.* 26 are the same as those in *v.* 52. Cp. Ex. x. 13; Num. xi. 31. *East* and *South* are separated for the sake of rhythm. A S.E. wind brought up the quails from 'the sea,' i.e. the Red Sea. "The period when they were brought to the camp of Israel was in spring, when on their northward migration from Africa. According to their well-known instinct, they would follow up the coast of the Red Sea until they came to its bifurcation by the Sinaitic Peninsula, and then would cross at the narrow part." Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 231.

28. *their camp...their habitations*] Cp. Ex. xvi. 13; Num. xi. 31.

So they did eat, and were well filled: 29
For he gave them their own desire;
They were not estranged from their lust. 30
But while their meat *was* yet in their mouths,
The wrath of God came upon them, 31
And slew the fattest of them,
And smote down the chosen *men* of Israel.
For all this they sinned still, 32
And believed not for his wondrous works.
Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, 33
And their years in trouble.
When he slew them, then they sought him: 34
And they returned and inquired early after God.
And they remembered that God *was* their rock, 35
And the high God their redeemer.

29. *for he gave them* &c.] **For he brought them that for which they lusted.** Cp. cvi. 14; Num. xi. 4, 34.

30. **They were not estranged from their lust,**
Their food was yet in their mouth,
31. **When the anger of God went up against them,**
And slew of the lustiest of them,
And laid low the young men of Israel.

Even before they had been surfeited with the quails—an allusion to Num. xi. 20—the judgement fell upon them (Num. xi. 33), and the plague broke out. God punishes men by answering their prayers, a truth which even heathen moralists recognised.

32—39. These judgements failed to reform them, and further chastisements produced only temporary and superficial amendments. Yet in spite of all, God continued to shew them mercy.

32. The further sin of murmuring and unbelief on the return of the spies, for which they were condemned to wander in the wilderness. See Num. xiv, esp. *v.* 22 ff.

for his wondrous works] I.e., because of. Better, as R.V., **in.**

33. *in vanity...in trouble*] Or, **as a breath**, unsubstantial and transitory (xxxix. 5, 11; lxii. 9): **with sudden terror** (Lev. xxvi. 16).

34. **When he slew them, then they would inquire after him:**
And return and seek God earnestly.

The tenses denote the repeated alternations of punishment and repentance. Cp. Jud. ii. 11 ff.

35. *their rock*] Cp. Deut. xxxii. 4 ff.

the high God] **God Most High**, *El Elyōn*, a combination found elsewhere only in Gen. xiv. 18 ff. But cp. lxxiii. 11; and vii. 17, xlvii. 2, *Jehovah Elyōn;* lvii. 2, *Elōhīm Elyōn*.

36 Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth,
And they lied unto him with their tongues.
37 For their heart was not right with him,
Neither were they stedfast in his covenant.
38 But he, *being* full of compassion, forgave *their* iniquity, and
destroyed *them* not:
Yea, many a time turned he his anger away,
And did not stir up all his wrath.
39 For he remembered that they *were but* flesh;
A wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.
40 How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness,

36. But they flattered him with their mouth,
And lied unto him with their tongue (R.V.).

As though God were a man who could be deceived by hypocrisy. Cp. Is. xxix. 13.

According to the Massoretic reckoning, this is the middle of the 2527 verses of the Psalter, but it must be remembered that the titles of the Psalms are frequently reckoned as verses in the Hebrew text (*Introd.* p. xvii).

37. *right ...stedfast*] Or, stedfast...faithful. Cp. v. 8, where the same words are used. *The heart* is the organ of thought and will, which determines the moral and religious character, the seat of true repentance and amendment of life (li. 10; lvii. 7).

38. This verse describes the general attributes of God, in virtue of which (*v.* 39) He spared Israel in spite of their guilt. Render:

But he, being full of compassion, forgiveth iniquity and destroyeth not,
And ofttimes turneth his anger away,
And stirreth not up all his wrath.

Cp. Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7; xxxii. 10, 12; Num. xiv. 18ff.; Deut. iv. 31.

"*V.* 38 is, according to *Kiddushin* 30*a*, the middle of the 5896 lines (στίχοι) of the Psalter. According to *Massoth* 22*b*, Ps. lxxviii. 38 and Deut. xxviii. 58, 59, xxix. 8 were recited, when the forty stripes save one, which Paul five times suffered (2 Cor. xi. 24), were inflicted on the offender." (Delitzsch).

39. *For* &c.] And he remembered &c. *Flesh* denotes the frailty of human nature, including moral as well as physical weakness: *a wind* &c. symbolises the transitoriness of human life. Cp. lvi. 4; ciii. 14 ff.; Gen. vi. 3; Job vii. 7 ff.

40—55. But as God multiplied His mercies, Israel multiplied its acts of rebellion: and in order to set the heinousness of their ingratitude in a still stronger light, the Psalmist goes back to recount the miracles which preceded and prepared for the Exodus.

40, 41. An emphatic repetition of *vv.* 17, 18.

provoke him] Rather, as in *vv.* 8, 17, 56, **rebel against him**. Both words, *rebel against* and *grieve*, occur together in Is. lxiii. 10.

And grieve him in the desert!
Yea, they turned *back* and tempted God, 41
And limited the Holy One of Israel.
They remembered not his hand: 42
Nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy.
How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, 43
And his wonders in the field of Zoan:
And had turned their rivers into blood; 44
And their floods, *that* they could not drink.

41. **And they turned again and tempted God,**
And provoked the Holy One of Israel.

limited (A.V.) would mean "entertained mean and circumscribed notions of His power and goodness and faithfulness" (Kay), or 'hindered His action by their unbelief' (Matt. xiii. 58). But more probably the word means *provoked* (LXX, Syr., Jer.).

the Holy One of Israel] A title characteristic of the Book of Isaiah, and found in the Psalter only here and in lxxi. 22, lxxxix. 18. It denotes that it was in His character of a Holy God that Jehovah had become the God of Israel. Though the title is not used in the Pentateuch, the thought is expressed there. In the chastisements of His people Jehovah proved Himself to be a Holy God, Who could not tolerate sin; and it was because Moses and Aaron failed to acknowledge that holiness, that they were punished by exclusion from Canaan (Num. xx. 12, 13).

42. *his hand*] His power exerted on their behalf. See Ex. iii. 19, and often. nor *the day* &c.] **Nor the day when he redeemed them from the adversary** (R.V.).

43. **How he set his signs in Egypt** (R.V.): words borrowed from Ex. x. 1, 2, "my signs which I have set among them." Cp. cv. 27.

Only six, or, if *v.* 48 or *v.* 50 refers to the murrain, possibly seven, plagues are mentioned, the plagues of lice, boils, and darkness being omitted. The order is different from that of Exodus, coinciding with it only in the first and last plagues. It is of course possible that the Psalmist, treating the narrative with poetic freedom, only mentions the principal plagues, and intentionally omits the others: but it is noteworthy that the three which he does not mention are just those the accounts of which are judged by critics upon grounds of style to have been derived from different documents: the plague of darkness from the 'Elohistic document,' and the plagues of lice and boils from the 'Priestly Code.' The accounts of the remaining seven are in the main derived from the 'Jehovistic document.' See Driver's *Introd. to the Lit. of the O. T.*, pp. 22 ff. It certainly looks as if the Psalmist used the 'Jehovistic document,' while it was in circulation as a separate work.

44. **And turned their rivers into blood,**
And their streams, that they could not drink.

See Ex. vii. 17 ff. The word for 'rivers' (*y'ōr*) is one specially used of the Nile and its canals.

45 He sent divers sorts *of flies* among them, which devoured them;
And frogs, which destroyed them.
46 He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar,
And their labour unto the locust.
47 He destroyed their vines with hail,
And their sycomore trees with frost.
48 He gave up their cattle also to the hail,
And their flocks to hot thunderbolts.
49 He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger,
Wrath, and indignation, and trouble,

45. The fourth and second plagues, Ex. viii. 20 ff., viii. 1 ff. The word rendered *divers sorts of flies*, or, **swarms of flies** (R.V.), is used only with reference to this plague (Ex. viii; Ps. cv. 31), and probably means some venomous kind of fly, such as abound in Egypt.

46. The eighth plague, Ex. x. 1 ff.

their increase] The produce of the land (lxvii. 6). The word rendered 'caterpillar' is not used in Exodus, but often occurs elsewhere, and probably denotes the locust in the larva or pupa state.

47. **He killed their vines** &c. The seventh plague, Ex. ix. 13 ff. Cp. cv. 33. Grapes and figs are among the fruits frequently represented in paintings in Egyptian tombs. The sycomore was and is one of the common trees of Egypt, much valued for its durable wood, of which mummy cases were commonly made.

with frost] This is the rendering of the LXX, Aq., Syr., Jer., but *great hailstones* (R.V. marg.) or *lumps of ice* is more probably the meaning.

48. **And he gave over their beasts to the hail,**
And their cattle to fiery lightnings.

As the text stands, the reference is to the destruction of the Egyptian cattle as well as the crops by the lightning which accompanied the hail-storm (Ex. ix. 28). But two Hebrew MSS., with which agrees the version of Symmachus, read DEBER, 'pestilence' in place of BĀRĀD, 'hail.' Now DEBER is the word used in Ex. ix. 3 ff. of the *murrain* which attacked the cattle. RESHEPH, the word rendered *fiery lightnings*, is also used of *burning fever* in Deut. xxxii. 24; Hab. iii. 5; in the latter passage in parallelism with DEBER. It seems possible, therefore, that this verse originally referred to the fifth plague, the murrain on the cattle. The LXX, Syr., Jer., Targ. however support the Massoretic Text.

49 51. The culmination of the plagues in the death of the first-born.

49. *He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger*] Lit., *he sent*, as in *v.* 45. The same phrase is found in Job xx. 23.

By sending evil angels *among them.*
He made a way to his anger; 50
He spared not their soul from death,
But gave their life over to the pestilence;
And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; 51
The chief of *their* strength in the tabernacles of Ham:
But made his own people to go forth like sheep, 52
And guided them in the wilderness like a flock.
And he led them on safely, so that they feared not: 53
But the sea overwhelmed their enemies.
And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, 54

by *sending evil angels* among them] R.V., **a band of angels of evil**: lit. *a mission of evil angels:* not wicked angels, but destroying angels, commissioned by God to execute His purposes of punishment. Cp. "the destroyer," Ex. xii. 23; and see 2 Sam. xxiv. 16 f.; 2 Kings xix. 35; Job xxxiii. 22.

50. *He made a way to his anger*] Lit., **he levelled a path for his anger, i.e.** gave it free course.

out gave their life over to the pestilence] This is the natural rendering of the words in this context. The rendering of R.V. marg., *gave their beasts over to the murrain*, is that of the Ancient Versions. But a reference to the murrain is out of place here, where the Psalmist is clearly describing the culmination of the plagues in the destruction of the firstborn. He emphasises the fact that after minor plagues had failed to touch Pharaoh's conscience, God finally attacked the very *lives* of the Egyptians.

51. *the chief of* their *strength*] **The beginning, or, firstlings of strength**, a term applied to firstborn sons in Gen. xlix. 3; Deut. xxi. 17. So cv. 36.

in the tabernacles of Ham] R.V. **tents**. Ham was the ancestor of Mizraim, **i.e.** Egypt, Gen. x. 6. Cp. cv. 23, 27; cvi. 22.

52—55. God's guidance of Israel through the wilderness into Canaan. Cp. Ex. xv. 13—17. The circumstances of the Journey have been already recounted in *vv.* 13 ff.

52. *But made* &c.] **But he led forth his people like sheep.** The verb is that which is commonly used of the journeyings of the Israelites from stage to stage through the wilderness (Ex. xv. 22 &c.). The figure of Israel as Jehovah's flock is a favourite one in the Asaphite Psalms (lxxiv. 1 note).

53. *feared not*] In contrast to their enemies, who were seized with panic (Ex. xiv. 25). Israel had no cause for fear (Ex. xiv. 13). Not of course that they never gave way to fear (Ex. xiv. 10).

overwhelmed] The same word as that rendered *covered* in Ex. xv. 10.

54. *The border of his sanctuary* may mean the land of Canaan, as that in which He purposed to place His temple, and *this mountain* may

Even to this mountain, *which* his right hand had purchased.

55 He cast out the heathen also before them,
And divided them an inheritance by line,
And made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.
56 Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God,
And kept not his testimonies:
57 But turned *back*, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers:
They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.
58 For they provoked him to anger with their high places,
And moved him to jealousy with their graven images.
59 When God heard *this*, he was wroth,
And greatly abhorred Israel:

denote Mount Zion. But it is preferable to render **to his holy border**, the land separate from all other lands, to be consecrated by His Presence, and known henceforth as the Holy Land: and in the next line, **to the mountain land, which** &c. This is the sense in Ex. xv. 17, which evidently was in the poet's mind. Cp. Deut. iii. 25; Is. xi. 9.

55. And he drove out the nations before them,
And allotted them for the portion of their inheritance:

i.e. distributed the land of the Canaanites among the Israelites by lot. Cp. Josh. xxiii. 4; Ps. cv. 11.

56—58. The unfaithfulness of Israel in Canaan during the period of the Judges.

56. *Yet* &c.] **Yet they tempted and rebelled against God the Most High.** In spite of all God's goodness to them, they persisted in their old unfaithfulness. Cp. *vv.* 17, 18; 40, 41. *God the Most High* is not *El Elyōn*, as in *v.* 35; but *Elōhim Elyōn*, the equivalent of *Jehovah the Most High*, vii. 17; xlvii. 2.

his testimonies] His commandments, regarded as bearing witness to His will. Cp. xix. 7; xxv. 10.

57. *unfaithfully*] Or, as R.V., **treacherously**. Cp. Hos. v. 7; vi. 7. *like a deceitful bow*] Which misses the mark and disappoints its owner. Cp. Hos. vii. 16.

58. They provoked Jehovah, the "jealous God" Who can tolerate no rival (Ex. xx. 5), by their adoption of Canaanite idolatries. Cp. Deut. xxxii. 16, 21.

59—64. Once more therefore God punished them for their sins, abandoning them to their enemies and even suffering the Ark to be captured.

59. Cp. *v.* 21. *and greatly abhorred Israel*] Better, **and utterly rejected Israel**. Israel here can hardly mean Ephraim only, as some commentators hold; for neither sin nor punishment was limited to

So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh,
The tent *which* he placed among men;
And delivered his strength into captivity,
And his glory into the enemy's hand.
He gave his people over also unto the sword;
And was wroth with his inheritance.
The fire consumed their young men;
And their maidens were not given to marriage.
Their priests fell by the sword;
And their widows made no lamentation.
Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep,
And like a mighty *man* that shouteth by reason of wine.

Ephraim, and the sanctuary of Shiloh, though in Ephraimite territory, was the sanctuary of all Israel.

60. *placed*] Lit. *caused to dwell.* The use of this word here and in Josh. xviii. 1 (A.V. *set up*) was probably suggested by its frequent use with reference to the dwelling of God among His people. Cp. Jer. vii. 12.

On the position and history of Shiloh see note on 1 Sam. i. 3.

61. *his strength...his glory*] The Ark, the symbol and seat of His majesty (1 Sam. iv. 21 f.; Ps. cxxxii. 8), was suffered to fall into the hands of the Philistines (1 Sam. iv. 11 ff.).

the enemy's hand] **The adversary's hand.** (R.V.)

62. See 1 Sam. iv. 2, 10, 17.

63. **Fire devoured their young men;**
And their maidens had no marriage song. (R.V.)

The fire of war (Num. xxi. 28) consumed the young men, so that the maidens remained unmarried.

64. *and their widows* &c.] This line recurs word for word in Job xxvii. 15. In the universal distress the customary rites of mourning were not performed, even for a husband (2 Sam. xi. 26, 27).

65—66. At length Jehovah took pity on His people, and delivered them from their adversaries.

65. While His people were at the mercy of their enemies He seemed to be asleep. Cp. xliv. 23, note.

that shouteth &c.] Cp. Is. xlii. 13, 14. "The daring figure of God's awaking as from sleep, and dashing upon Israel's foes, who are also His, with a shout like that of a hero stimulated by wine, is more accordant with Eastern fervour than with our colder imagination; but it wonderfully expresses the sudden transition from a period, during which God seemed passive and careless of His people's wretchedness, to one in which His power flashed forth triumphant for their defence." (Maclaren). Many modern commentators follow the LXX, Targ., and Jer., in rendering *like a giant who has been overcome with wine.* This gives a good parallelism to the preceding line, but the verb does not occur elsewhere in this sense, and bold as are the similes of the Psalmists, this would be scarcely seemly.

66 And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts:
He put them to a perpetual reproach.
67 Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph,
And chose not the tribe of Ephraim:
68 But chose the tribe of Judah,
The mount Zion which he loved.
69 And he built his sanctuary like high *palaces*,
Like the earth which he hath established for ever.
70 He chose David also his servant,
And took him from the sheepfolds:
71 From following the *ewes* great with young he brought him
To feed Jacob his people,
And Israel his inheritance.

66. *And he smote* &c.] Kender with R.V., **And he smote his adversaries backward**, a general allusion to the victories over the Philistines and other enemies of Israel under Samuel, Saul, and David. The A.V. follows Jewish authorities in seeing a reference to 1 Sam. v. 6 ff.

67—69. The choice of Zion.

67. *Moreover* &c.] **And he rejected the tent of Joseph**, i.e. Shiloh in the tribe of Ephraim. The Ark was never brought back there, and if Shiloh was not actually destroyed by the Philistines, it ceased to be the sanctuary of the nation. Jeremiah points to the fall of Shiloh as a warning to his incredulous contemporaries, who refused to believe that Jehovah could possibly desert Jerusalem and allow His Temple to be destroyed (Jer. vii. 12, 14; xxvi. 6, 9). Stanley observes that the first division of the history of the Chosen People ended with the overthrow of the first sanctuary, as the second division terminated in the fall of the second sanctuary, and the third by the still vaster destruction of the last Temple of Jerusalem. *The Jewish Church*, Lect. xvii.

68. *which he loved*] Cp. lxxxvii. 2; xlvii. 4.

69. *like high* palaces] Rather, **like the heights** of heaven, which along with the earth are emblems of grandeur and stability.

70—72. The choice of David as king.

70. *David his servant*] Though any Israelite might profess himself Jehovah's servant in addressing Him, only a few who were raised up to do special service or who stood in a special relation to Jehovah, such as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Job, are distinguished by this title of honour. Cp. 2 Sam. iii. 18; vii. 5, 8; 1 Kings viii. 24; Ps. lxxxix. 3, 20; cxxxii. 10.

71. From following the ewes with their young ones he brought him,
To be shepherd of Jacob his people &c.

This natural metaphor for the ruler's care of his people was especially appropriate in the case of David, who was taken from being the shep-

So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; 72
And guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

herd of Jesse's flock to be the shepherd of Jehovah's flock. Cp. 2 Sam. v. 2.

72. *the integrity of his heart*] Cp. 1 Kings ix. 4; Ps. vii. 8; ci. 2; and the use of the cognate adjective in xv. 2; xviii. 23.

the skilfulness] The regal faculty of *discernment* which Solomon desired (1 Kings iii. 9), and with which he was so richly endowed (1 Kings iv. 29).

PSALM LXXIX.

The occasion of this Psalm has already been discussed in the Introduction to Ps. lxxiv. It consists of three stanzas.

i. The Psalmist tells God of the invasion of His land, the desecration of His Temple, the destruction of His city, the slaughter of His servants, the reproach of His people (1—4).

ii. He entreats God to show mercy to Israel, and not to punish them any more for the sins of their forefathers, but to chastise their wanton oppressors (5—8).

iii. Once more he pleads for help and pardon, urging that the honour of God's name is at stake, and that the outrages of the heathen should not go unpunished; and he concludes with a vow of perpetual praise from the restored nation (9—13).

This Psalm, together with Ps. cxxxvii, is prescribed in the Talmudic treatise *Sopherim* (xviii. 3) for use on the 9th day of the month Ab, the day on which the destruction of both the first and the second Temple was commemorated. Cp. Zech. vii. 3.

A Psalm of Asaph.

O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; 79
Thy holy temple have they defiled;
They have laid Jerusalem on heaps.

1—4. The Psalmist tells his grief to God: His land is overrun by heathen, His temple is desecrated, His city is in ruins, His people are slaughtered, the survivors are the scorn of their neighbours.

1. Cp. Jer. li. 51; Lam. i. 10; and for the desecration of the Temple cp. lxxiv. 7; Ezek. vii. 21, 22.

the heathen] Lit. as in *vv.* 6, 10, the nations: but where, as here, the nations are in antagonism to God and His people, the rendering *heathen* may be retained. *thine inheritance*] Here of the holy land (cp. Ex. xv. 17): more commonly of the people (lxxiv. 2; lxxviii. 62, 71).

on heaps] I.e. in ruins: perhaps an allusion to the prophecy of Micah

2 The dead bodies of thy servants have they given
To be meat unto the fowls of the heaven,
The flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.
3 Their blood have they shed like water
Round about Jerusalem; and *there was* none to bury *them.*
4 We are become a reproach to our neighbours,
A scorn and derision to them that are round about us.
5 How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry, for ever?
Shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

(iii. 12; cp. Jer. xxvi. 18). For the archaic use of 'on,' Wright (*Bible Word-Book*, p. 436) quotes Shakespeare, *Henry V*, v. 2. 39;

And all her husbandry doth lie *on heaps.*

2. The horrors of a remorseless slaughter were aggravated by the disgrace of the corpses being left unburied, in accordance with the threats of the law (Deut. xxviii. 26) and prophets (Jer. vii. 33; viii. 2; ix. 22; xv. 3; xvi. 4; xix. 7).

thy servants...thy saints] These titles are not meant to plead Israel's merits, but Israel's relationship to God in virtue of His covenant with them (lxxiv. 20; l. 5).

3. *like water*] Freely, and as though it were of little worth. Contrast cxvi. 15.

none to bury them] Cp. Jer. xiv. 16. This passage is quoted freely in 1 Macc. vii. 17 with reference to the murder of certain Assideans by the high priest Alcimus, "He took of them threescore men and slew them in one day, according to the words which one wrote, The flesh of thy saints and their blood did they shed round about Jerusalem, and they had none to bury them." Clearly the meaning cannot be that the Psalm was written with reference to that event, for by that time (B.C. 162) the situation of affairs was wholly different from that described in the Psalm. Judas had won many victories, and the Temple had been re-dedicated. Moreover the Psalm implies a much more extensive slaughter of Israelites, and that by heathen, not by a treacherous Israelite. There is probably another reminiscence of *v.* 3 in 1 Macc. i. 37, "They shed innocent blood on every side of the sanctuary, and defiled it."

4. A repetition of xliv. 13, with the change of 'thou makest us' to 'we are become.' Cp. lxxx. 6; Ezek. xxii. 4; xxv. 6 ff. Dan. ix. 16 combines this verse with *v.* 8 *a*.

5—8. Prayer that God will cease to be angry with His own people and will punish their destroyers.

5. How long, Jehovah, wilt thou be angry for ever?
(How long) shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

As in xiii. 1, faith combines two questions into a self-contradictory expression. *How long* and *for ever* are characteristic words of Ps. lxxiv (*vv.* 1, 10, 19). Cp. lxxx. 4; lxxxix. 46.

Shall thy jealousy burn like fire] "Jehovah thy God is a devouring

Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known 6
thee,
And upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.
For they have devoured Jacob, 7
And laid waste his dwelling place.
O remember not against us former iniquities: 8
Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us:
For we are brought very low.
Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: 9
And deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's
sake.
Wherefore should the heathen say, Where *is* their God? 10

fire, a jealous God" (Deut. iv. 24). He cannot endure a divided allegiance, and must punish Israel for its sin. Cp. Deut. xxix. 20; Zeph. i. 18.

6. *upon the heathen* &c.] Not upon the nations as such, but upon the nations which refuse to acknowledge Jehovah, and make havoc of His people. Render with R.V., **that know thee not...that call not upon thy name.**

7. *his dwelling place*] R.V. **his habitation**, marg. *pasture*: a different word however from *pasture* in *v.* 13.

vv. 6, 7 recur in Jer. x. 25. At first sight it would appear that the prophecy must be earlier than the Fall of Jerusalem, and that the Psalmist must be quoting from the prophet. But ch. x in its present form can hardly be from the pen of Jeremiah himself: *vv.* 1—10 at any rate can hardly be his: and *vv.* 23—25 appear to be a composite passage. The insertion of 'yea, they have devoured him and consumed him' after 'Jacob,' looks like the transformation of poetry into prose, and it is possible that the Psalm is the original.

8. **Remember not against us the iniquities of our forefathers** (R.V.). For these sins Israel in the Exile knew that it was suffering (Lam. v. 7), in accordance with the warnings of the law (Ex. xx. 5). For the phrase cp. Jer. xi. 10. But the next verse shews that the Psalmist does not claim that his own generation is innocent. Cp. Lev. xxvi. 39, 40.

prevent us] **Come to meet us.** See on lix. 10. It is an appeal to the fundamental revelation of God as a merciful God (Ex. xxxiv. 6).

9—12. Repeated prayers for deliverance for the honour of God's Name.

9. *for the glory of thy name*] Lit. *for the sake of the glory of thy name* (xxix. 2; lxvi. 2). If Thou art not moved by the sight of our sufferings, at least be jealous for Thine own honour, lest the heathen should think that Israel's God is powerless to help His people.

purge away] Or, *make atonement for.* See note on lxv. 3.

10. *Wherefore* &c.] The same plea in cxv. 2 (cp. also cxv. 1 with *v.* 9); Joel ii. 17. Cp. Ex. xxxii. 12; Ps. xlii. 3; Mic. vii. 10.

Let him be known among the heathen in our sight
By the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed.
11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee;
According to the greatness of thy power
Preserve thou those that are appointed to die;
12 And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom
Their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord.
13 So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture
Will give thee thanks for ever:
We will shew forth thy praise to all generations.

let him be known] Better:

Let vengeance for thy servants' blood that is shed
Be made known among the heathen in our sight.

Defer not vengeance to some future generation: let us see with our own eyes the fitting punishment of the enemies of Israel. This verse and *v.* 9 are based upon Deut. xxxii. 43. Note how the thought of vengeance goes side by side with that of deliverance in Is. xxxv. 4; xlvii. 3; lix. 17; lxi. 2; lxiii. 4; and in Jer. l. 15, 28; li. 6, 11, 36, chapters which also probably date from the Exile.

11. The same phrases recur in cii. 20.

thy power] Lit. *thine arm*, a word which recalls the memories of a glorious past (Ex. xv. 16; Ps. xliv. 3).

those that are appointed to die] Lit., *the sons of death*. It is not necessary to understand these expressions literally of prisoners sentenced to execution: more probably they denote the prison and the living death of exile (Is. xlii. 7; xlix. 9; lxi. 1).

12. *our neighbours*] Cp. *v.* 4: the nations around, such as the Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites, which instead of sympathising rejoiced at Israel's calamity. Cp. Ezek. xxv.

sevenfold] Cp. Gen. iv. 15; and contrast Christ's law of forgiveness, Matt. xviii. 22.

into their bosom] A metaphor from the practice of carrying articles in the folds of the dress. It further suggests the idea of full and intimate recompence. Cp. Is. lxv. 6; Jer. xxxii. 18; Luke vi. 38.

13. Concluding vow of thanksgiving. Israel will then be able to render its tribute of unceasing praise to its Lord and Shepherd.

sheep of thy pasture] Cp. lxxiv. 1, note; lxxx. 1.

thy praise] Cp. lxxiv. 21; lxxviii. 4. To set forth Jehovah's praise was Israel's mission, Is. xliii. 21.

PSALM LXXX.

The Psalm begins with a prayer to the Shepherd of Israel once more to manifest His power and lead His people to victory (1—3).

How long, pleads the Psalmist, will God continue to be angry with His people and abandon them to the mockery of their enemies (4—7)?

He reminds God of the care which He had once bestowed upon the vine of Israel, and of its former luxuriant growth: why then has He now withdrawn His protection and abandoned it to the ravages of its foes (8—13)?

Once more he prays that God will visit and restore His people, and bind them to Himself by a new bond of allegiance (14—19).

The refrains (3, 7, 19) mark a strophical arrangement, and *vv.* 8—19 naturally fall into two divisions, 8—13, 14—19. But there are indications of some dislocation of the text of *vv.* 14 ff., and it is possible that the strophical arrangement was originally more complete.

This Psalm throws into the form of a prayer those hopes for the restoration of the Northern tribes and the reunion of all Israel, which are found in the prophets from the time of Amos onward, and are expressed in the fullest detail by Jeremiah (iii. 11—15; xxxi. 1—21), and Ezekiel (xxxvii. 15—28), and, probably at a still later date, after the first Return from the Exile, in Zech. ix—xi.[1] It must have been written after the fall of the Northern Kingdom, when political rivalry between Israel and Judah was at an end; and it may have been written either before the Exile or after the Return from Babylon, for the language of *vv.* 3, 7, 19 does not necessarily imply that the whole nation was in exile. But more probably it was written during the Babylonian exile; for (1) *vv.* 3, 7, 19 are most naturally interpreted as a prayer for the termination of the exile: (2) *vv.* 12 ff. seem to describe the land as wholly overrun by enemies and the national existence as for the time at an end: and (3) the resemblances of language to Pss. lxxiv and lxxix are in favour of referring it to the same period[2].

On the whole then, though the Psalm may be a prayer of the post-exile congregation for the fuller restoration of Israel, and doubtless was so used by them, it seems best to regard it as originally the prayer of Israel in exile for a complete national restoration. The special interest shewn in the tribes of the Northern Kingdom (*v.* 2) may have been due to the connexion of the author with one of those tribes: but it is sufficiently accounted for by the prominence given to Israel's restoration in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. "The brotherly love of Judah for Israel (cp. lxxvii. 15; lxxxi. 5) is a reflection (if we may expand the thought of the Asaphite Psalmists in accordance with Jer. xxxi. 9, 20) of the fatherly love of Jehovah for His 'first-born.' Man's self-will (Hos. v. 11) cannot permanently make void the divine idea of all-Israel." (Cheyne.)

According to the Massoretic accentuation the title runs, For the chief

[1] For a discussion of the date of Zech. ix—xi the writer would refer to his *Doctrine of the Prophets*, pp. 445 ff.

[2] With *v.* 1 cp. lxxiv. 1: lxxix. 13; with *v.* 4 cp. lxxiv. 1, 9, 10; lxxix. 5; with *v.* 6 cp. lxxix. 4, 12; with *v.* 18 cp. lxxix. 6, 9.

Musician, set to Shoshannim (*lilies*): **a testimony of Asaph, a Psalm**: but the analogy of the title of Ps. lx suggests the connexion of the words *Shoshannim Eduth*, i.e. (*Like*) *lilies is the testimony*, pure and beautiful. These would be the opening words of some well-known song in praise of the Law, to the melody of which the Psalm was to be sung. Cp. the titles of Pss. xlv, lxix; and see *Introd.* p. xxvi. The LXX adds to the title, *A Psalm concerning the Assyrian*, as in Ps. lxxvi.

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim-Eduth, A Psalm of Asaph.

80 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock;
Thou that dwellest *between* the cherubims, shine forth.
2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh

1—3. A prayer for the restoration of God's favour to His people.

1. The Psalmist addresses God (1) as *the Shepherd of Israel*, a title which is the correlative of the words in lxxix. 13, *thy people and the flock of thy pasture* (cp. lxxiv. 1), and appeals to their claim on His protecting care: (2) as **thou that leddest Joseph like a flock**, recalling His providential guidance of them through the wilderness lxxvii. 20; lxxviii. 52): (3) as **thou that sittest enthroned upon the Cherubim**, words which suggest the double idea of the King enthroned in heaven and yet dwelling in the midst of His people (1 Sam. iv. 4; 2 Sam. vi. 2; 2 Kings xix. 15), and are here clearly intended to recall the Presence of God with His people in the wilderness manifested from the 'mercy-seat' above the Ark (Ex. xxv. 22). *Israel* is the nation as a whole; *Joseph* represents the tribes of the Northern Kingdom, in which the Psalmist has a special interest. Cp. *Jacob and Joseph*, Ps. lxxvii. 15. The use of the title *Shepherd* may allude to the use of the word in Jacob's blessings of Joseph, Gen. xlviii. 15 (*fed* = *shepherded*), xlix. 24.

shine forth] Manifest Thyself in power and glory for our deliverance. Cp. l. 2; xciv. 1; Deut. xxxiii. 2.

2. Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh were united by the tie of common descent from Jacob's beloved wife Rachel, who is regarded by Jeremiah (xxxi. 15) as the mother of the Northern Kingdom, and they are named as representatives of that Kingdom. According to Num. ii. 17 ff. these tribes encamped to the West of the Tabernacle, and marched immediately behind it (*v.* 24). *Before Ephraim* &c. therefore means, 'placing Thyself at their head as a victorious leader, as Thou didst go before them of old in the journeyings of the wilderness.' At first sight it may seem strange that Benjamin is reckoned among the Northern tribes, for partially at any rate it sided with Rehoboam (1 Kings xii. 21; 2 Chr. xi. 3, 23; xv. 8, 9); but the one tribe remaining to David was Judah (1 Kings xi. 13, 32, 36), and Benjamin must be reckoned to the Northern Kingdom to make up Ten tribes, for Simeon had become merged in Judah and is not counted. The principal Benjamite towns of Bethel, Gilgal, and Jericho belonged to the Northern Kingdom.

Stir up thy strength,
And come and save us.
Turn us again, O God, 3
And cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

O LORD God *of* hosts, 4
How long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?
Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; 5
And givest them tears to drink *in great* measure.

stir up thy strength] Put in action **thy might** (xx. 6) which seems to be dormant. *come and save us*] R.V., **come to save us**: lit. come *for salvation* or *deliverance for us.*

3. *Turn us again*] Usually taken to mean *bring us back* from exile, or more generally, *restore us:* repair our broken fortunes. Cp. lx. 1. But is it not rather an allusion to Ephraim's prayer in Jer. xxxi. 18, interpreted in Lam. v. 21 in a spiritual sense? National repentance is the condition of national restoration; and it must be God's own work. Make us return to Thee, and return to us (*v.* 14) with Thy favour as of old; then and not till then shall we be saved.

cause thy face to shine] Shew us Thy favour as of old: words borrowed from the great Aaronic benediction, Num. vi. 25. Cp. Ps. iv. 6.

4—7. How long shall Israel continue to be the object of Jehovah's displeasure, and the scorn of neighbouring nations?

4. *O LORD God* of *hosts*] *Jehovah Elōhīm Tsebāōth*, as in lix. 5. For the meaning see note on xlvi. 7. There is a special significance in the repeated appeals to Jehovah (4, 14, 19) by the title which denotes His universal sovereignty, and therefore His ability to help Israel in its humiliation, and also recalls the days when He went forth with Israel's armies to victory.

how long wilt thou be angry] Lit. *hast thou been fuming.* For the verb cp. lxxiv. 1. The tense denotes 'how long hast Thou been and wilt Thou continue to be angry,' and implies that Israel's distress has already lasted long. Cp. lxxiv. 9, 10; lxxix. 5.

against the prayer of thy people] As the punishment for the sins of their ancestors (Prov. i. 28 ff.; Lam. iii. 8). Perhaps the smoke of the divine wrath is thought of as a thick cloud which interposes between them and God; see Lam. iii. 44. We might render *in spite of the prayer*, but the rendering of A.V. and R.V. is the more forcible. God's indignation against His people is so intense, that even their prayers are an offence to Him. On the wrath of God as the manifestation of His holiness see Oehler's *O. T. Theology*, § 48.

The LXX and Syr. read *thy servant* or *thy servants* for *thy people.*

5. Thou hast fed them with bread of tears,
And given them tears to drink in large measure.

i.e. made tears their daily portion: cp. xlii. 3; cii. 9. *In large measure,*

6 Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours:
And our enemies laugh among themselves.
7 Turn us again, O God *of* hosts,
And cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

8 Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt:
Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.
9 Thou preparedst *room* before it,
And didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land.
10 The hills were covered *with* the shadow of it,
And the boughs thereof *were like* the goodly cedars.

lit. *by the tierce*, or third part of some larger measure, probably the *bath* (=*ephah*, in dry measure), and if so containing nearly three gallons: a huge drinking goblet, though but a tiny measure for the dust of the earth, Is. xl. 12, the only other place where the word occurs.

LXX, Syr., Jer., read *us* for *them*.

6. *a strife* &c.] An object of contention (Jer. xv. 10): the petty states round about (lxxix. 4, 12), Edomites, Arabians, and the like, quarrel among themselves for our territory. Lagarde conjectures that we should read MANOD, *shaking* (of the head), for MADŌN, *strife*, as in xliv. 14, which would suit the parallelism better.

laugh among themselves] Rather, *to their heart's content*, so, *laugh scornfully*. Cp. lxxix. 4.

P. B. V. 'laugh *us* to scorn' follows LXX, Vulg., Jer.

8—13. Under the figure of a vine, once carefully tended and spreading far and wide in luxuriant growth, but now exposed to the ravages of wild beasts, the Psalmist contrasts God's former care for His people with their present plight. The figure of the vine may have been suggested by Gen. xlix. 22. See Hos. x. 1; Is. v. 1—7; xxvii. 2—6; Jer. ii. 21; xii. 10 ff. "The vine was the emblem of the nation on the coins of the Maccabees, and in the colossal cluster of golden grapes which overhung the porch of the second Temple; and the grapes of Judah still mark the tombstones of the Hebrew race in the oldest of their European cemeteries, at Prague." *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 164.

8. **Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt** (R.V.): the verb is one which can be applied to the transplantation of a vine, or the migration of a people, as in lxxviii. 52. **Thou didst drive out the nations, and plantedst it.** See Ex. xxiii. 28 ff.; xv. 17; Ps. xliv. 2; lxxviii. 55.

9. *Thou preparedst* room *before it*] As the vinedresser prepares the ground for his vine by clearing away the stones and thorns and all that would hinder its free growth (Is. v. 2), so God prepared Canaan for Israel by the expulsion of its old inhabitants.

and didst cause it &c.] Rather, **and it struck deep its roots, and filled the land.**

10. *The hills*] **The mountains.**

the goodly cedars] **Cedars of God** (*El*), those "which he hath planted,"

She sent out her boughs unto the sea, 11
And her branches unto the river.

Why hast thou *then* broken down her hedges, 12
So that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?
The boar out of the wood doth waste it, 13
And the wild beast of the field doth devour it.
Return, we beseech thee, O God *of* hosts: 14
Look down from heaven, and behold,
And visit this vine;
And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, 15

the indigenous cedars of Lebanon, noblest of forest trees. Cp. "mountains of God" (xxxvi. 6). The alternative rendering of R.V. marg., *And the cedars of God with the boughs thereof*, gives the same sense as the LXX. The vine grew so that it overshadowed the mountainous country to the South, and the cedars of Lebanon on the North, an allusion to the ideal boundaries of the Promised Land, as described in Deut. xi. 24 (where 'the wilderness' = 'the mountains' here). That the next verse clearly refers to the Eastern and Western boundaries is an argument in favour of this interpretation.

11. She sent out her branches unto the sea,
And her shoots unto the River (R.V.),

spreading westward to the Mediterranean, and eastward to the Euphrates, boundaries approximately realised in the time of David and Solomon. See lxxii. 8; Gen. xv. 18; Ex. xxiii. 31; Deut. xi. 24; 2 Sam. viii. 6; 1 Kings iv. 24.

12. *Why* &c.] The question is half expostulation, half inquiry, for Israel's present plight is a riddle to the Psalmist.

hedges] R.V. fences. Vineyards were always carefully fenced to protect them (Is. v. 5). Almost the same words recur in lxxxix. 40, 41.

13. The boar out of the forest doth ravage it,
And the wild beasts of the field feed on it.

"Under Hermon," says Dr Tristram, "in the vineyard districts, we heard grievous lamentations of the damage done to the vines by the boars, which not only devour the grapes, but also munch up the bearing shoots." *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 56. Israel's land is laid waste by remorseless enemies.

14—19. Repeated prayers for the restoration of God's favour to Israel.

14. *Return*] Or, as R.V., **Turn again.** It is the intransitive form of the verb *turn us again* in *vv.* 3, 7, 19.

15. This verse presents serious ambiguities and difficulties. The first word may be rendered as a substantive, in close connexion with *v.* 14, *and the vineyard*, or better as R.V. **and the stock**: or, as in R.V. marg., as a verb: **and protect** (or **maintain**) **that which thy right**

And the branch *that* thou madest strong for thyself.

16 *It is* burnt with fire, *it is* cut down:
They perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.
17 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand,
Upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thyself.
18 So will not we go *back* from thee:
Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.
19 Turn us again, O LORD God *of* hosts,
Cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

hand hath planted. The second rendering is preferable, though not wholly free from difficulty.

the branch] Or, *the son*, which is the literal meaning of the word. Cp. Ex. iv. 22; Hos. xi. 1. Probably an allusion to Gen. xlix. 22. The Targum interprets, "and upon Messiah the king, whom thou hast made strong for thyself." But the primary reference is obviously to the nation.

madest strong] Tending it with loving care till it grew up: cp. lxxxix. 21; Is. i. 2.

16. The gender of the word shews that *it* refers to the vine. *Cut down*, as fit for nothing but fuel. Cp. Is. xxxiii. 12; Ezek. xv. 4.

they perish &c.] The figure is dropped. The Israelites perish, for God has not merely hidden His face, but turned it upon them in anger.

It has been conjectured that there has been some displacement of the text, and various rearrangements have been proposed. Thus Cheyne would read the verses in this order: 11, 14, 15, 12, 13, 16. *Let them perish* will then refer to Israel's enemies. Then too there may have been some confusion between 15 *b* and 17 *b*.

17. A repetition of *v.* 15, dropping the metaphor. Extend Thy hand, put forth Thy power to protect the people which Thy right hand made into a nation and delivered from Egypt. *The son of man* describes it as affected by human frailty and therefore needing divine help. The personification of Israel as Jehovah's son underlies the language of the verse. Possibly there is an allusion to *Benjamin* = 'son of the right hand.'

18. **So shall we not go back from thee** (R.V.), bound to Thee by a fresh tie of allegiance. *quicken us*] The restoration of our national life (Hos. vi. 2) will evoke a fresh response of grateful praise.

19. *O LORD God* of *hosts*] There is a climax in the use of divine names in the refrains (3, 7, 19). The Psalmist clenches his appeal by the use of the covenant name Jehovah, along with the title expressive of universal sovereignty, God of hosts.

PSALM LXXXI.

The beginning of each month was marked by the blowing of the silver trumpets (Num. x. 10); but the first day of the month Ethānīm or Tisri (Sept.—Oct.), the seventh month of the ecclesiastical year and the first of the civil year, was kept as a solemn festival and was called 'the Day of trumpet-blowing' or 'the Feast of trumpets' (Num. xxix. 1; Lev. xxiii. 24). Upon the fifteenth day of the same month, at the full moon, the Feast of Tabernacles began (Lev. xxiii. 39). To this double celebration *v.* 3 plainly alludes; and we find that from ancient times this Psalm has been the New Year's Day Psalm of the Jewish Church, and that by an apparently unanimous Jewish tradition it is connected with the Feast of Tabernacles. It is unreasonable to disregard the evidence of practice and tradition, and maintain that the Psalm was intended for the Passover, on the ground of the reference to the Exodus in *v.* 5. In point of fact its contents are more appropriate to the Feast of Tabernacles than to the Passover. The Feast of Tabernacles was the most joyous of all the feasts, and the opening verses are a call to a jubilant celebration. The Feast of Tabernacles was the time appointed for the septennial recitation of the Law (Deut. xxxi. 10); and the leading thoughts of the Psalm are that allegiance of Israel to Jehovah alone which was the fundamental principle of the Law; Jehovah's deliverance of Israel from Egypt, which was the ground upon which that claim rested; and Israel's failure in its duty and consequent loss of promised blessing.

The Psalm falls into three divisions:

i. A call to celebrate the festival with shout and song and blowing of trumpets, for it is a divine ordinance for Israel (1—5).

ii. Throwing himself back in imagination to the time of the Exodus, the Psalmist hears the voice of God proclaiming the decree for Israel's liberation, and the fundamental principle of the covenant made at Sinai, the absolute allegiance of Israel to Jehovah as their God (6—10).

iii. But Israel would not obey, and Jehovah was forced to leave them to experience the consequences of their obstinate self-will. Yet even now, if they would obey His commands, He would subdue their enemies, and satisfy them with the promised blessings of plenty (11—16).

Some commentators regard the Psalm as a combination of two fragments, 1—5 *a*, *b*, 5 *c*—16, on the ground of the want of connexion between 5 *b* and 5 *c*, the dissimilarity in style between the two parts, and the unsuitability of the latter part for a festival hymn. But these arguments are not convincing. If the transition in *v.* 5 is somewhat abrupt, it is not more so than is frequently the case; that the Psalmist should pass from a summons to the celebration of the festival to a consideration of its religious significance is perfectly natural; and a review of Jehovah's relation to Israel is surely not unsuitable for a festival hymn, in view alike of the general commemorative purpose of the festival, and of the particular fact that it was the occasion for the septennial recitation of the Law, which was based upon that relation. That rejoicing should be tempered by warning is fully in accord with the prophetic spirit of the Asaphic Psalms. Comp. also Ps. xcv.

There is nothing in the Psalm by which its date can be fixed with certainty. It contains several allusions to Deut. xxxii. and vv. 11, 12 may be a reminiscence of Jer. vii. 22. The summons to the festival implies that the Temple was standing, and from vv. 14, 15 it may be inferred that the nation was then threatened or oppressed by foreign enemies. Perhaps it may belong to the later years of the kingdom, and if so, probably to the reign of Josiah.

It is the special Psalm for Thursday as well as for New Year's Day according to the ancient Jewish usage. See *Introd.* p. xxv. Presumably the title in the LXX once contained a reference to this usage, as the Old Latin Version has *cantici Sabbati*; but it has disappeared from all but one or two MSS of the LXX.

To the chief Musician upon Gittith, *A Psalm* of Asaph.

81 Sing aloud unto God our strength:
Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.
2 Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel,
The pleasant harp with the psaltery.
3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon,
In the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.

On the title, **For the chief Musician: set to the Gittith** R.V.; see *Introd.* p. xxv.

1—3. A call to the joyous celebration of the festival, addressed to the whole congregation (*v.* 1), to the Levites as the appointed leaders of the Temple music (*v.* 2), and to the Priests, whose special duty it was to blow the trumpets (*v.* 3). See Num. x. 8, 10; Josh. vi. 4 ff.; 2 Chr. v. 12 ff., vii. 6; Ezra iii. 10.

1. *God our strength*] Cp. Ex. xv. 2; Ps. xlvi. 1.

2. *Take a psalm* &c.] Or, **Raise a psalm and sound the timbrel.** The timbrel, or tabret, was a tambourine or hand drum; the psaltery, like the harp, a stringed instrument.

3. *the trumpet*] Heb. *shōphar*, the horn, as distinguished from the metal trumpet. In the Pentateuch the use of the *shophār* is only prescribed in connexion with the year of Jubilee (Lev. xxv. 9), but according to practice it was used for the New Year as well.

in the new moon] The Targum expressly states that the new moon of Tisri is meant here, and there is no sufficient reason for setting aside this ancient Jewish tradition and supposing that the new moon of Nisan, the first month of the ecclesiastical year, is meant, on the ground that the contents of the Psalm shew that the festival at the full moon referred to in the next line must be the Passover.

in the time appointed &c.] Better, **at the full moon, for the day of our feast.** If the month referred to is Tisri, *our feast* must be the Feast of Tabernacles, which began at the full moon on the 15th of that month. It was often called simply "the feast" (1 Kings viii. 2, &c.), and was regarded as the most joyous of all the feasts. The trumpet

For this *was* a statute for Israel,
And a law of the God of Jacob.
This he ordained in Joseph *for* a testimony,
When he went out through the land of Egypt:
Where I heard a language *that* I understood not.

I removed his shoulder from the burden:

blowing at the beginning of the month is regarded as pointing forward to it, and it was repeated on the day itself, in accordance with the law of Num. x. 10.

4, 5. The reason for the celebration in the divine appointment of the festival as a memorial of God's goodness to Israel.

4. **For it is a statute for Israel,**
An ordinance of the God of Jacob. (R.V.)

It refers to the feast. The title *God of Jacob* carries our thoughts back beyond the Exodus to the providential dealings of Jehovah with the great ancestor of the nation (Gen. xlvi. 2 ff.).

5. **He appointed it in Joseph for a testimony** (R.V.): to bear continual witness to His care of Israel. *when* &c.] Render, **When he** (i.e. God) **went out against** (or *over*) **the land of Egypt,** to execute judgement upon the Egyptians. See Ex. xi. 4.

where *I heard a language* that *I understood not*] The poet identifies himself with his nation and speaks in the name of Israel of old. It was an aggravation of their misery that they were toiling for masters whose language they could not understand. This meaning however, though Ps. cxiv. 1 offers a parallel, is hardly adequate here. It is possible to render, **The speech of one that I know not do I hear,** and to regard the line as the words of the poet himself, introducing the divine oracle which follows. He suddenly breaks off, hearing a supernatural voice addressing him. Cp. Job iv. 16; and for the introduction of God as the speaker, Ps. lx. 6; lxii. 11. But it is difficult to see how the poet could speak of God as *one whom I know not:* the phrase must surely mean more than 'strange,' 'unearthly': and it is preferable to render, **The speech of one that I knew not did I hear.** The Psalmist speaks in the person of Israel at the time of the Exodus. This he can do, since Israel of all time is one in virtue of the continuity of its national life. Israel then *began to hear* Jehovah (such is the proper force of the tense in the original), Whom it had not yet learned to know as the self-revealing God of redemption, speaking to it in the wondrous works of the deliverance from Egypt. See Ex. iii. 13; vi. 2 ff., 7. The substance of the words which Israel heard in Egypt is given in the next verse, which contains God's decree for Israel's liberation from servitude:

6. **I have removed his shoulder from the burden:**
His hands shall go free from the basket.

The term 'basket' does not occur in Exodus, but baskets for carrying the burdens of bricks or clay so often referred to in Exodus (i. 11; ii. 11; v. 4, 5; vi. 6, 7) are frequently represented in Egyptian paintings.

His hands were delivered from the pots.
7 Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee;
I answered thee in the secret place of thunder:
I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.
8 Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee:
O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me;
9 There shall no strange god be in thee;
Neither shalt thou worship *any* strange god.
10 I *am* the LORD thy God,

From the pots (A.V.), i.e. *from making the pots* P.B.V.), is an improbable explanation.

The P.B.V. in *v.* 5, "when he came out of the land of Egypt and had heard a strange language," is derived through the Vulg. from the LXX. Similarly Jerome; but it is probably only a conjectural rendering of a difficult passage, and does not represent a different text.

7. From the divine decree for Israel's liberation the transition to an address to Israel is easy. Israel of the present is regarded as one with Israel of the past.

Thou calledst &c.] For the phrase cp. l. 15; and for the fact, Ex. ii. 23 ff.

in the secret place of thunder] In the covert of the thunder-cloud God conceals and reveals Himself (xviii. 11, 13; lxxvii. 17 ff.). At the passage of the Red Sea, when Israel was sore afraid and cried out unto Jehovah, He "looked forth upon the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of cloud, and discomfited the host of the Egyptians" (Ex. xiv. 10, 24).

I proved thee at the waters of Meribah] Testing thy faith and obedience. The name Meribah or *Strife* was a reminder of repeated unbelief and ingratitude (Ex. xvii. 7; Num. xx. 13; Ps. lxxviii. 20); of the long 'controversy' (Mic. vi. 2) of a long-suffering God with an obstinate people. It is possible that the reference to this miracle in particular was suggested by the libations of water at the Feast of Tabernacles, which commemorated the supply of water in the wilderness.

8—10. Israel's duty of allegiance to Jehovah alone; the fundamental principle of the covenant. Israel in the wilderness is primarily addressed, but Israel of every age is included.

8. *Hear...and I will testify unto thee*] Or, **I will protest unto thee,** of solemn warning and exhortation. Cp. l. 7; and numerous passages in Deuteronomy, e.g. vi. 4; v. 1, 6; iv. 26; xxx. 19: xxxi. 28.

if thou wilt hearken &c.] Better as R.V., **if thou wouldest hearken unto me!**

9. *no strange god*] Cp. xliv. 20; Deut. xxxii. 16.

any *strange god*] **Any alien god.** Cp. Deut. xxxii. 12. Absolute fidelity to Jehovah was the fundamental principle of the Sinaitic covenant, embodied in the first 'word' of the Decalogue.

Which brought thee out of the land of Egypt:
Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.
But my people would not hearken to my voice; 11
And Israel would none of me.
So I gave them up unto their own heart's lust: 12
And they walked in their own counsels.
O that my people had hearkened unto me, 13
And Israel had walked in my ways!
I should soon have subdued their enemies, 14
And turned my hand against their adversaries.
The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves 15
unto him:
But their time should have endured for ever.

10. **I am Jehovah thy God,**
Which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

Cp. Ex. xx. 2 ff.; Deut. xx. 1. To Jehovah Israel owed its existence. The fact that He redeemed it from Egypt constituted His claim upon its allegiance. Cp. 1 John iv. 10.

open &c.] God is ready liberally to satisfy all their needs. Cp. Matt. vii. 7, 11.

11, 12. Israel's disobedience and its punishment.

11. **But my people hearkened not to my voice.** For *my people... Israel* in a similar complaint see Is. i. 3.

12. **So I let them go after the stubbornness of their heart,**
That they might walk in their own counsels. (R.V.).

God punishes men by leaving them to their own self-willed courses of action, which prove their ruin. Cp. Job viii. 4; Prov. i. 30 ff.; Rom. i. 24 ff.; 2 Thess. ii. 10 ff. 'Stubbornness' is a favourite word with Jeremiah (vii. 24, &c.), occurring elsewhere only in Deut. xxix. 19.

Most editions both of the Bible and of the Prayer Book wrongly print *hearts'* for *heart's*. See Scrivener, *Auth. Ed. of Engl. Bible*, p. 152, and *Earle, Psalter of* 1539, p. 313.

13—16. Yet God's mercy is inexhaustible. Even now if Israel would obey Him, He would subdue their enemies, and bless them abundantly. Cp. Is. xlviii. 17—19.

13. **O that my people were hearkening unto me,**
That Israel would walk in my ways!

14. **I should soon subdue their enemies,**
And turn my hand against their adversaries.

In my ways is the contrast to *in their own counsels.* (Jer. vii. 23, 24.) The hand which is now turned against Israel in chastisement would be turned against their enemies.

15. **The haters of Jehovah should come cringing unto him,**
So that their time should be for ever.

16 He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat:
And *with* honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.

Unto him may mean *to Jehovah* or *to Israel*; but apparently the latter. Jehovah's enemies are the enemies of His people, and He would force them to pay homage, however reluctantly (lxvi. 3 note), to Israel; that so Israel's time of prosperity might know no end, the nation's life never fail.

16. Tense and person both present serious difficulties, and it seems necessary to emend the text of the first line, and read:

Yea, I would feed him with the fat of wheat,
And with honey out of the rock would I satisfy thee.

Him = Israel. The transition to direct address in *v.* 2 ('thee') seems harsh, but is not uncommon in Heb. The third person 'them' or 'him' in LXX, Jer., Syr., is probably only a correction to avoid it. We have here another reminiscence of Deut. xxxii, *vv.* 13, 14. Cp. cxlvii. 14. To an obedient people God would fulfil His ancient promises of blessing. Cp. Ex. iii. 8; Deut. vii. 12, 13; viii. 6 ff.

PSALM LXXXII.

This Psalm is a vision of judgement. It sets forth, in a highly poetical and imaginative form, the responsibility of earthly judges to the Supreme Judge, Whose representatives they are, and from Whom they derive their authority. The dramatic form, the representation of God as the Judge, and the introduction of God Himself as the speaker, are characteristics common to several of the Asaphic Psalms. See Pss. l, lxxv, lxxxi.

God takes His stand as Judge in a solemn assembly: His delegates appear before His tribunal (1).

Sternly He upbraids them for their injustice and partiality, and bids them remember what the duties of their office are (2—4).

But they are incapable of reformation, and the foundations of society are being shaken by their misconduct. Though they bear the lofty title of gods, they shall share the common fate of men (5—7).

The Psalmist concludes with a prayer that God will Himself assume the government of the world (8).

In Ps. l the nation of Israel is assembled for judgement: here the authorities of the nation who have abused their trust are put upon their trial. The evil complained of has been common in Oriental countries in all ages, and ancient Israel was no exception. Exhortations to maintain the purity of justice are common in the Law: complaints of its maladministration are frequent in the Prophets. One passage in particular—Is. iii. 13 ff.—presents a close parallel. "Jehovah standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the peoples. Jehovah will enter into judgement with the elders of His people, and the princes thereof: for ye —ye have devoured the vineyard: the spoil of the afflicted is in your

houses: what mean ye that ye crush my people, and grind the face of the afflicted? saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts."

The authorities of the nation are called *gods* (*vv.* 1, 6) as being the representatives of God, *sons of the Most High* (*v.* 6) as exercising a power delegated by the supreme Ruler of the world. The judgement which they give is God's (Deut. i. 17). Even if it be held that *Elōhīm* should be rendered *God* rather than *the judges* in Ex. xxi. 6; xxii. 8, 9, 28; 1 Sam. ii. 25, it is clear that the administration of justice at the sanctuary by those who were regarded as the representatives of God is meant in these passages, and the direct application of the title *Elōhīm* to judges in the Psalm is fully intelligible. This interpretation is the oldest, for it is not only given by the Targum, but was that generally current in our Lord's time, as is clear from His use of the passage in John x. 34 ff., and it is the simplest and most natural. Two other explanations however require notice.

(i) Some commentators think that the Psalm refers to foreign rulers, by whom the nation of Israel was being oppressed. The prayer of *v.* 8, it is said, proves that the reference cannot be merely to the injustice of Israelite judges, for God is entreated to arise and judge the world. But the judgement of Israel is often regarded as part of a universal judgement. See Ps. vii. 6 ff.: and particularly the passage of Isaiah already referred to, where Jehovah is standing up to judge *the peoples*, when He summons the elders and princes of Israel to account for oppressing their poor countrymen. The language of *vv.* 2—4 tallies exactly with the language used elsewhere of the oppression of poor and defenceless Israelites by the rich and powerful: there is not the slightest hint that the terms 'poor' and 'afflicted' are transferred to Israel as a nation. And lastly, though heathen princes claimed divine titles (Ezek. xxviii. 2, 6; Is. xiv. 14) it is improbable that the Psalmist would acknowledge their right to them as he does.

(ii) Others think that by *Elōhīm* angels are meant, and hold that the Psalm refers generally to God's judgement upon unjust judges in heaven and earth; or more particularly to the judgement of the patron-angels of the nations. This view, proposed by Bleek, is adopted by Cheyne, who says, "The charge brought against these patron-angels of the nations (see Dan. x, xii) is that they have (in the persons of their human subordinates) permitted such gross violence and injustice, that the moral bases of the earth are shaken." If this view is to be adopted, it is certainly the case that "no Psalm makes a stronger demand than this on the historic imagination of the interpreter." But (1) as has already been remarked in the note on lviii. 1 with reference to a similar interpretation of that Psalm, there is nothing in the context to justify the importation of an idea which belongs to the later development of Jewish theology. (2) The idea that angels can be punished with death is startling, and foreign to the O.T. view of angelic nature. (3) There is not the slightest hint that *vv.* 2—4 refer to anything but the oppression of men by men. The language, as has been pointed out above, closely resembles that of the Law and the Prophets, and there is no reason for taking it in a non-natural sense.

There is nothing in the Psalm to fix its date. The evils complained

of were constantly recurring, especially of course when the central government was weak.

This Psalm is the Psalm for the third day of the week in the ancient Jewish liturgy. See *Introd.* p. xxvii.

A Psalm of Asaph.

82 God standeth in the congregation of the mighty;
He judgeth among the gods.
2 How long will ye judge unjustly,
And accept the persons of the wicked? Selah.
3 Defend the poor and fatherless:
Do justice to the afflicted and needy.

1. A vision of God as the Judge of judges.

God] Originally no doubt *Jehovah*, for which the Elohistic editor has substituted *Elōhim*. *standeth*] Or, *taketh his stand*: solemnly takes His place as president. Cp. Is. iii. 13 *a*; Am. vii. 7; ix. 1.

in the congregation of the mighty] I.e., as P. B. V., *of princes*. But we must rather render, **in the assembly of God** (*Elōhīm*), i.e., not the congregation of Israel, though this is called *the congregation of Jehovah* (Num. xxvii. 17; cp. Ps. lxxiv. 2), but an assembly summoned and presided over by God in His capacity of Almighty Ruler.

he judgeth &c.] **In the midst of gods** (*Elōhīm*) **will he judge.** According to the view adopted above, the judges and authorities of Israel are meant by *gods*. It might indeed be supposed that the poet intended to represent God as holding His court surrounded by angels, like an earthly king in the midst of his courtiers (cp. 1 Kings xxii. 19; Job i, ii); and so probably the Syriac translator understood the verse: "God standeth in the assembly of the angels, and in the midst of the angels will He judge." But *Elōhīm* can hardly have a different meaning from that which it has in *v.* 6, where it clearly refers to the judges who are put on their trial; and the address in *v.* 2 would be unintelligible if the persons addressed had not already been mentioned.

2—4. God speaks, arraigning the judges for injustice and partiality, and bidding them perform their duties faithfully.

2. *accept the persons*] Or, as R.V., **respect the persons**, shewing partiality to the rich and powerful. Strict impartiality in the administration of justice is frequently enjoined in the Law. Favouring the poor is condemned as well as favouring the rich. See Ex. xxiii. 2, 3, 6—8; Lev. xix. 15, 35; Deut. i. 17; xvi. 18 ff.: cp. Prov. xviii. 5; xxiv. 23. The music strikes up to emphasise the question, and as it were give time for an answer. But the judges have no defence, and God proceeds to remind them of their duty.

3. Judge the weak and fatherless:
Do justice to the afflicted and destitute.

Deliver the poor and needy:
Rid *them* out of the hand of the wicked.
They know not, neither will they understand;
They walk on in darkness:
All the foundations of the earth are out of course.
I have said, Ye *are* gods;
And all of you *are* children of the most High.
But ye shall die like men,

4. Rescue the weak and needy:
Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked.

Cp. Is. i. 17; x. 1, 2. Human authorities are God's representatives to see that the weak and friendless have justice done them. See Ex. xxii. 22 ff.; Deut. x. 17, 18; Ps. x. 14, 18; Mal. iii. 5: and comp. the portrait of the ideal ruler in Ps. lxxii. 12 ff.; Is. xi. 3, 4.

5—7. The character of these judges described and their sentence pronounced.

5. God is still the speaker; but instead of addressing the culprits, He describes their incorrigible blindness and obstinacy, before He pronounces sentence on them. **They have no knowledge, neither will they get understanding**, though these are the needful qualifications for a judge (1 Kings iii. 9 ff.): **they walk on to and fro in darkness**, complacently self-satisfied with their ignorance and moral darkness: and consequently **all the foundations of the earth are shaken**, the principles upon which the moral order of the world is based are imperilled. Cp. xi. 3, lxxv. 3, for the metaphor; and generally, Prov. ii. 10—15.

6. I said, Ye are gods,
And all of you sons of the Most High (R.V.).

I is emphatic. It is by God's appointment that they have been invested with divine authority to execute judgement in His name. Cp. the language used of the king, **ii. 7; lxxxix. 27.**

To the words of this verse our Lord appealed (John x. 34 ff.) when the Jews accused Him of blasphemy because He claimed to be one with God. In virtue of their call to a sacred office as representatives of God the judges of old time were called gods and sons of the Most High, and this in spite of their unworthiness. Was it then blasphemy, He asked, for one who had received a special consecration and commission as God's representative, one whose life and work bore witness to that consecration, to call Himself the Son of God?

On the surface this may seem to be a verbal argument such as the Jews themselves would have used; but the real significance of the quotation lies deeper. The fact that it was possible for men so to represent God as to be called gods or divine was a foreshadowing of the Incarnation. "There lay already in the Law the germ of the truth which Christ announced, the union of God and man." Bp Westcott.

7. *But*] R.V., **Nevertheless.** Though they bear this high title, it

And fall like one of the princes.
8 Arise, O God, judge the earth:
For thou shalt inherit all nations.

will not exempt them from punishment. They shall die like common men, and fall like any other princes whose ruin is recorded in history (Hos. vii. 7). Or is there an allusion to the princes mentioned in lxxxiii. 9 ff.?

8. The Psalmist has watched the trial and condemnation of Israel's judges; and the sight stirs him to appeal to God Himself to assume the office of Judge not only for Israel but for all the world. If Israel's judges have failed so lamentably in their duty towards their own countrymen, how can Israel rule the world, though all the nations have been promised to its kings for their inheritance (ii. 8)? Nay, God Himself—THOU is emphatic—must take possession of all the nations as their Sovereign and their Judge.

PSALM LXXXIII.

The vision of the judgement of unjust rulers who oppress God's people within the nation is followed by a prayer for the judgement of the nations which threaten to destroy God's people as a nation from without. The nations around are represented as joining in an unhallowed confederacy against Israel. Their aim is nothing less than to frustrate the counsel of God, and blot the very name of Israel out of remembrance. The ancient enemies of Israel, the Moabites and Ammonites, are the leaders of the coalition; with them are united the Edomites, Amalekites, and Arabian tribes from the desert: Philistia, Tyre, and even Assyria, appear as their auxiliaries.

In spite of the apparent definiteness of the historical circumstances, it is impossible to fix the occasion of the Psalm with any certainty.

(i) Many commentators connect it with the events related in 1 Macc. v. Provoked by the success of Judas in restoring the Temple, "the nations round about"..."took counsel to destroy the generation of Jacob that was among them, and thereupon they began to slay and destroy the people." Judas accordingly turned his arms against them, and of the tribes and nations named in the Psalm, the Edomites, Ammonites, Philistines, and Tyrians are mentioned among the enemies whom he defeated. The Ishmaelites and perhaps Gebal and the Hagarenes might be included among the Arabians (*v.* 39); but the Moabites no longer existed as an independent nation, and the Amalekites had long been destroyed (1 Chr. iv. 42 f.). It is assumed that the names of ancient enemies are vaguely used for the tribes inhabiting the territories which formerly belonged to them, or are introduced to heighten the effect. Assyria is supposed to mean Syria, or possibly the Samaritans. But (1) the narrative of 1 Macc. does not speak, as the Psalm does, of a confederacy. (2) The prominence of "the children of Lot" in the Psalm does not suit a time when Moab had ceased to exist. (3) While it is

possible that Asshur might mean Syria, it is hardly possible that the most bitter enemies of the Jews could be mentioned merely as the auxiliaries of less important nations.

(ii) Other commentators think that the Psalm refers to the coalition against Jehoshaphat described in 2 Chron. xx. Upon that occasion the Moabites and Ammonites took the leading part: they were joined by Arabians[1] and Edomites, and the combined forces made their rendezvous in Edom[2] before invading Judah. The aim of the invaders (2 Chr. xx. 11) corresponds to that described in the Psalm, and the result of the victory (*v.* 29) is the confession of Jehovah's power for which the Psalmist prays; while the prominent part taken by the Asaphite Levite Jahaziel gives a link of connexion with an Asaphite Psalm. But of the nations named in the Psalm the Ishmaelites and Hagarenes, Gebal and Amalek, Philistia, Tyre, and Assyria, are not mentioned in Chronicles. Even if we could suppose that the Ishmaelites, Hagarenes and Gebal correspond to the Meunites, and that Amalek is included in Edom (Gen. xxxvi. 12), there is no hint that the coalition against Jehoshaphat was supported by the Philistines and Phoenicians, though we learn from Amos i. 6, 9. that they were in alliance with Edom against Judah at an early date; while the mention of Assyria at this period, even as an auxiliary, is isolated and perplexing.

(iii) Others again refer the Psalm to the Persian period, and connect it with the opposition to the rebuilding of the city described in Nehemiah iv. 1 ff., 7 ff., where Arabians, Ammonites, and Ashdodites are mentioned among the enemies of Judah. In this case Asshur must stand for Persia, as in Ezra vi. 22. Robertson Smith (*Old Test. in Jewish Ch.* ed. 2, p. 439) refers it to the time of Artaxerxes Ochus, c. 350 B.C., or later. But the circumstances of the first occasion present no really close correspondence to the situation described in the Psalm; and of the details of the time of Ochus we are wholly ignorant.

In fact history records no one single occasion upon which the nations and tribes mentioned in the Psalm were united in a confederacy against Israel. On the whole, the invasion recorded in 2 Chron. xx offers the closest parallel and the best illustration, and the Psalm may have been written with reference to it. It is possible that nations which did not actually join the confederacy may have threatened to do so; or enemies of Israel, actual and possible, past and present, are enumerated in order to heighten the effect, and forcibly represent the formidable nature of the danger. Poetry is not history, and as Bishop Perowne observes, "divine inspiration does not change the laws of the imagination, though it may control them for certain ends."

It is of course possible that the Psalm refers to some episode in Jewish history of which no record has been preserved; nor must the possibility be excluded that the Psalm is not historical but, so to speak, ideal. A poet, pondering on such a passage as Micah iv. 11—13, at

[1] For the corrupt reading of the Mass. Text in *v.* 1 *some of the Ammonites* we should probably read with the LXX *some of the Meūnīm* (1 Chr. iv. 41; 2 Chr. xxvi 7). Josephus (*Ant.* IX. 1, 2) says that the Moabites and Ammonites took with them a great body of Arabians.

[2] For *Arum* (Syria) in *v.* 2 *Edom* must certainly be read.

a time when neighbouring nations were menacing Judah, might expand that prophecy in a concrete form into the prayer of this Psalm, that, though enemies from every side should conspire to destroy Israel, Jehovah would frustrate their schemes, and make their malice an occasion for the exhibition of His own supremacy.

The Psalm falls into two main divisions.

i. The Psalmist prays that God will not remain an inert and indifferent spectator, while enemies close in upon His people from every side with intent to destroy them utterly (1—8).

ii. May He discomfit them as He discomfited the Midianites and Canaanites of old, till they yield Him homage; or if they will not submit, may He disperse and destroy them till they are forced to acknowledge His supremacy (9—18).

A Song *or* Psalm of Asaph.

83 Keep not thou silence, O God:
Hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.
2 For lo, thine enemies make a tumult:
And they that hate thee have lift up the head.
3 They have taken crafty counsel against thy people,
And consulted against thy hidden ones.

1—4. An urgent prayer that God will come to the rescue of His people, whom their enemies are conspiring to annihilate.

1. *Keep not* &c.] **O God** (*Elōhīm*), **keep not still**, lit. *let there be no rest to thee.* *hold not thy peace*] Or, **be not silent.** Cp. xxviii. 1; xxxv. 22; xxxix. 12. On the Lat. heading in P. B. see note at p. 837.

be not still] Neither take thou rest, **O God** (*El*). For the phrases of this verse cp. Is. lxii. 1, 6, 7. God seems to be indifferent to the danger of His people: their enemies are mustering unrebuked: but He has only to speak the word, and their schemes will be utterly frustrated (lxxvi. 6 ff.).

2. *make a tumult*] A word denoting the uproar and tumult of a throng of people: the substantive for *multitude*, frequently used of a great army, is derived from it: cp. xlvi. 3, 6; Is. xvii. 12; xxix. 5, 7, 8; 2 Chr. xx. 2, 12, 15, 24.

thine enemies...they that hate thee] For Israel's enemies are Jehovah's enemies: their plot to destroy His people is a plot to frustrate the purposes and put an end to the worship of Jehovah. Cp. *against thee*, *v.* 5; and Judg. v. 31.

3. *They have taken...and consulted*] **They are taking...and consulting together.** Jehovah's *hidden ones* are His people whom He conceals in His pavilion in the day of trouble (xxvii. 5; xxxi. 20), those to whom He has given an asylum from their enemies. The later Greek Versions (Aq. Symm. Theod.) and Jerome read the singular, *thy secret place*, i.e. the temple, cp. Ezek. vii. 22.

They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a 4
nation;
That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.
For they have consulted together *with one* consent: 5
They are confederate against thee:
The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; 6
Of Moab, and the Hagarenes;
Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; 7
The Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre;
Assur also is joined with them: 8

4. *from* being *a nation*] Their aim is to obliterate the name of Israel from the map of the world. For the phrase cp. Jer. xlviii. 2; and see lxxiv. 8; 1 Macc. v. 2. *that the name* &c.] More accurately, and so the name of Israel shall be remembered no more.

5. *they are confederate against thee*] Lit., against thee do they make a covenant. Cp. *v.* 2.

5—8. An enumeration of the confederate peoples. From the south-east come the Edomites, who inhabited the mountainous region between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Akaba, and the Ishmaelites, who roamed over the deserts from the borders of Egypt to the north-west shore of the Persian Gulf (Gen. xxv. 18): from the east of the Dead Sea come the Moabites, and from the north-east the Hagarenes or Hagrites who lived in the neighbourhood of the Hauran, east of Gilead (1 Chr. v. 10, 19, 20);—they are mentioned in the inscriptions of Sennacherib along with the Nabatheans. Gebal is not the Gebal of Ezekiel xxvii. 9 to the north of Tyre (Byblus), but the northern part of the mountains of Edom, southward of the Dead Sea, a district known to Pliny as Gebalene. The Ammonites, ancient and bitter foes of Israel, come from their home beyond the Jordan, the Amalekites from the southern deserts between the Arabah and the Mediterranean. The maritime states of the Philistines on the west and Tyre on the north have joined them, and even the remote Assyria sends a contingent to support the confederacy.

6. *The tabernacles* &c.] The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, i.e. the nomadic Edomites and Ishmaelites who dwell in tents. Cp. Hab. iii. 7. *of Moab*] Omit *of*.

7. *the Philistines*] Lit. Philistia. In Am. i. 6 ff., 9 ff., Philistia and Tyre are censured for surrendering Israelite captives to Edom, which in its turn (*v.* 11) is condemned for unbrotherly hostility to Israel.

8. *Assur*] Assyria. The mention of Assyria as an auxiliary of Moab and Ammon seems to imply that it was not yet a leading power, which would fall in with an early date for the Psalm. Assyria is not known to have come in contact with Israel until the reign of Jehu, who paid tribute to Shalmaneser II in B.C. 842. Still in the time of Jehoshaphat the Assyrians appear to have made conquests in Phoenicia

They have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.

9 Do unto them as *unto* the Midianites;
As *to* Sisera, as *to* Jabin, at the brook of Kison:
10 *Which* perished at En-dor:
They became *as* dung for the earth.
11 Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb:
Yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna:
12 Who said, Let us take to ourselves
The houses of God in possession.

and Syria, and the Ammonites might have procured help from them as they did from Syria at an earlier date (2 Sam. x. 6).

If the Psalm belongs to the Persian or Maccabaean age, Assyria must stand for Persia or Syria. Theodoret suggests that the Samaritans, as Assyrian colonists, are meant. Lagarde, followed by Cheyne, cuts the knot by reading *Gedûr* for *Asshur* (see 2 Sam. iii. 3); but this petty Syrian kingdom would hardly be mentioned as an important ally.

they have holpen] Lit. *they have been an arm*, i.e. a help. Cp. Is. xxxiii. 2.

the children of Lot] The Moabites and Ammonites, who seem to be singled out as the leaders of the confederacy. Cp. 2 Chron. xx. 1. The phrase occurs in Deut. ii. 9, 19, the only other passages in O.T. outside of Genesis where Lot is mentioned. It points to the unbrotherly character of the hostility of these nations by recalling their common descent.

9—12. Prayer for their destruction as the Canaanites were destroyed by Deborah and Barak, and the Midianites by Gideon.

9. Do thou unto them as unto Midian;
As unto Sisera, as unto Jabin, at the torrent of Kishon.

The victory of Gideon over the confederate forces of the Midianites, Amalekites, and Arabians (Judg. vii, viii) is referred to by Isaiah as a typical triumph (ix. 4; x. 26). They fell, like Jehoshaphat's enemies (2 Chr. xx. 23), by one another's hands. For the rout of the Canaanites see Judg. iv, v. The storm-swollen torrent of the Kishon contributed to the victory (Judg. v. 21).

10. En-dor is not mentioned in the narrative of Judges, but it was situated in the same valley as Taanach and Megiddo, which are named in Judg. v. 19, and is mentioned along with them in Josh. xvii. 11.

as *dung*] Omit *as*. A contemptuous expression for the fate of unburied corpses. Cp. 2 Kings ix. 37; Jer. viii. 2; &c.

11. The Psalmist returns to Gideon's victory. Oreb and Zeeb ('Raven' and 'Wolf') were the princes, i.e. generals, of the Midianites (Judg. vii. 25; Is. x. 26); Zebah and Zalmunna were the kings of Midian (Judg. viii. 5 ff., 12, 18 ff.).

12. Who have said, Let us take for ourselves in possession
The habitations (or, *pastures*) **of God.**

Who refers to the present enemies of Israel, not to the Midianites.

O my God, make them like a wheel; 13
As the stubble before the wind.
As the fire burneth a wood, 14
And as the flame setteth the mountains on fire;
So persecute them with thy tempest, 15
And make them afraid with thy storm.
Fill their faces *with* shame; 16
That they may seek thy name, O LORD.
Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; 17

God's habitations or pastures are the land which He has given to His people Israel. Cp. 2 Chr. xx. 11. The LXX reads *altar*, or according to another reading, *sanctuary*.

13—18. Renewed prayer for the dispersion and destruction of the enemy expressed by figures from nature. The final end and object of all is that they may acknowledge Jehovah to be supreme.

13. *make them like a wheel*] Rather, like whirling dust or chaff. Anything whirled away before the wind may be meant. Thomson (*Land and Book*, p. 563) thinks that the globular heads of the wild artichoke may be meant. They are light as a feather, and in the autumn when they break off from the parent stem "thousands of them come scudding over the plain, rolling, leaping, bounding with vast racket, to the dismay both of the horse and rider." The Arabs, who call it *'akkūb*, "derive one of their many forms of cursing from this plant: 'May you be whirled like the *'akkūb* before the wind.'"

as the stubble] As stubble. Dry, light, broken straw, whirled away from the threshing floor, which was usually in an exposed situation to catch the wind, is meant. Cp. Is. xvii. 13; xxix. 5; Jer. xiii. 24; Ps. i. 4.

14, 15. **As fire that consumeth a forest,**
And as flame that burneth up mountains;
So shalt thou pursue them with thy tempest,
And dismay them with thy hurricane.

God's wrath is a fiery blast which at once kindles and fans the flame (Is. xxix. 6; xxx. 27, 30, 33), and pursues and consumes His enemies like a fire in the forest or on the mountains. "Before the rains came," says Thomson (*Land and Book*, p. 341), "this whole mountain side was in a blaze. Thorns and briars grow so luxuriantly here that they must be burned off always before the plough can operate. The peasants watch for a high wind, and then the fire catches easily, and spreads with great rapidity." Cp. Is. x. 16—19; Jer. xxi. 14.

16. *Fill their faces* with *shame*] Or, disgrace. Let them be disgraced by defeat and disappointed in their project. But this is only as the means to the higher end, that they may seek Jehovah's name, recognising in Israel's God the God of revelation, and submitting themselves to His Will.

Yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:
18 That *men* may know that thou, whose name alone *is* JEHOVAH,
Art the most High over all the earth.

17. **Let them be ashamed and dismayed for ever;**
Yea, let them be put to confusion and perish:
18 **That they may know that thou, whose name is JEHOVAH,**
even thou alone,
Art the Most High over all the earth.

The primary object of the lament is conversion (*v.* 16); but if they will not acknowledge Israel's God as the God of revelation, let them be compelled by reiterated judgements to recognise Him as the Almighty Ruler. Cp. Is. xxxvii. 20; 2 Chr. xx. 29. The ruin with which they threaten God's people will recoil upon themselves (vi. 10; xxxv. 4, 26). For 'know' see ix. 13: and generally, cp. xcvii. 2, 9; Is. xxvi. 9—11.

PSALM LXXXIV.

With Ps. lxxxiii the Asaphite division of the Elohistic collection ends; and Pss. lxxxiv—lxxxix form an appendix to that collection, which shews but few indications of the hand of the Elohistic editor. It can however still be traced in Ps. lxxxiv in the phrase *Jehovah Elōhim Tsebāōth* (*v.* 8), and in the absolute use of *God* (*v.* 9), by the side of *Jehovah* (*vv.* 1, 2, 3, 8, 11, 12).

Ps. lxxxiv is a companion poem to Pss. xlii—xliii. It is animated by the same spirit of enthusiastic devotion to the service of God and love for the worship of the Temple. It makes use of the same expressions (e.g. *tabernacles*, or *dwelling-place*, *v.* 1; *the living God*, *v.* 2; *appear before God*, *v.* 7); and it presents the same structure of three equal stanzas, which are divided by musical interludes, instead of by refrains as in Pss. xlii—xliii.

These Psalms may have been written by the same poet, though under widely different circumstances. In Pss. xlii—xliii the leading motive is the pain of being debarred from approaching the sanctuary: in Ps. lxxxiv it is joy at the privilege of access to it. The author's feet seem to be already standing in the gates of Jerusalem. It is virtually a pilgrim song, though it is not included in the special collection of "Songs of Going up" (*Introd.* p. xxviii).

It clearly belongs to a time when the Temple was standing, and its services were regularly carried on; and if *thine anointed* (*v.* 9) refers (as it is most natural to suppose) to the king, it must be assigned to the period of the monarchy. But more than this it is impossible to say. Some attempts to fix the date of the companion Pss. xlii—xliii have been considered in the introduction to those Psalms, and shewn to be improbable. Certainly it cannot, as Delitzsch supposes, be so early as the time of David. The Temple is a permanent building with courts and chambers annexed to it for resident ministers: its services appear to

be of long standing; and pilgrimages to it are an established part of the national religious life.

But as "the Psalter in its spiritual fulness belongs to no special time," so "this Psalm is the hymn of the Divine life in all ages. It brings before us *the grace and the glory* of sacrifice, of service, of progress, where God alone, the Lord of Hosts, is the source and the strength and the end of effort." (Bp Westcott.)

The Psalm is divided into three equal stanzas by *Selah*, marking a musical interlude after *vv.* 4 and 8. At first sight this division seems unsatisfactory, because it separates verses of similar form and meaning; and it may be thought preferable to treat the Ps. as consisting of two stanzas only: *vv.* 1—7; 8—12. But the triple division is probably right, and corresponds to the triple division of Pss. xlii—xliii. The second and third stanzas open with words suggested by the close of the first and second stanzas respectively, and the connexion of thought appears to be as follows:

i. The Psalmist's eager longing for the house of God (1, 2); the happiness of those who dwell there (3, 4).

ii. Happy too are those who in the strength of God surmount all obstacles, and appearing in His Presence offer their prayers (5—8).

iii. The preciousness of the privilege of access to God, Who is the unfailing source of blessing for those who trust in Him (9—12).

Beside Pss. xlii—xliii. Pss. xxvii, lxi, lxiii should be compared.

On the title, **For the chief Musician; set to the Gittith. A Psalm of the sons of Korah** (R.V.), see *Introd.* pp. xxi, xxv, and pp. 223 ff.

To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

How amiable *are* thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! 84
My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the 2
LORD:

1, 2. The Psalmist's delight in the house of God.

1. *How amiable* are *thy tabernacles*] Or, How dear is thy dwelling-place. *Amiable* is no longer used of things, in the sense of *worthy to be loved*. For *dwelling-place* see note on xxvi. 8. The plural of the original, as in xliii. 3, may be 'amplificative,' expressing the dignity of the house of God; or it may be used with reference to the various buildings of which the Temple was composed.

LORD of hosts] See note on xlvi. 7.

2. **My soul hath pined, yea, even fainted.** The verbs are perfects, and it seems best to suppose that he is recalling the earnest longings which are even now finding satisfaction, as his feet stand in the Temple courts, and his heart and flesh sing for joy unto the living God. The latter verb denotes joyous singing, such as that with which pilgrims enlivened their journey. Cp. Jer. xxxi. 12; and the cognate substantive in Ps. xlii. 4. *Soul*, *heart*, and *flesh*, the emotions, the reason and the will, with the living organism of the body through which they act, make up the whole man. See xvi. 9; lxxiii. 26; and cp. 1 Thess. v. 23.

My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.
3 Yea, the sparrow hath found a house,
And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young,
Even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.
4 Blessed *are* they that dwell in thy house:
They will be still praising thee. Selah.

the living God] The same phrase (*El chay*) as in xlii. 2. God Himself is the final object of desire: the Temple is only the means of realising His Presence.

3, 4. The happiness of those who find a home in the Temple.

3. The Psalmist envies the privilege of the birds which build their nests within the precincts of the Temple. If even they are allowed to find a home there, surely he may expect a welcome. As at an earlier time the surrounding scenery was eloquent to the poet of his own misfortunes (xlii. 7), so now a feature in the Temple courts expresses the longing of his heart. No doubt the figure is abruptly introduced. The picture is painted, and left to the reader to interpret. But it is unnecessary to suppose that the text is defective, and must be emended by the insertion of words to give the sense: 'Birds have their nests, and so have I found (or rather, would I fain find) a home by thine altars.' The direct address to God is not out of place, because though the Psalmist does not directly mean himself by the sparrow and swallow, his own longing breaks through the figure and moulds the language.

sparrow...swallow] Cp. Prov. xxvi. 2. *Tsippōr*, rendered *sparrow*, is a generic term for small birds: *dᵉrōr* is rendered *dove* by the LXX, Targ., and Syr., but probably means *swallow*. In ancient Greece as in the East the birds which nested in temples were accounted sacred. Comp. the story of Aristodicus at the temple of Branchidae (Herodotus i. 159); and "still the swallow seeks the temple enclosure at Jerusalem, and the mosque of Omar, as a secure and safe nesting-place." (Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 206.)

may lay] Rather, **hath laid**.

even *thine altars*] Not of course the actual altar but its neighbourhood. Or we may render, *by thine altars*.

my King and my God] See v. 2; cp. xliv. 4.

4. *Blessed*] Or, *happy*, as in i. 1; and so in *vv.* 5, 12. Not those who are "of the household of God" in the wider sense (xxiii. 6; xxvii. 4; cp. Eph. ii. 19), but the actual ministers of the Temple appear to be meant. They can be *still*, i.e. again and again, raising their Hallelujahs.

5—8. Yet not only those are happy, who reside within the precincts of the Temple, but those who in the strength of God surmounting every obstacle appear in His Presence and offer their prayers.

Blessed *is* the man whose strength *is* in thee; 5
In whose heart *are* the ways *of them.*
Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; 6
The rain also filleth the pools.
They go from strength to strength, 7

5. Happy are the men whose strength is in thee;
In whose hearts are the highways (to Zion).

Happy are those whose minds are wholly set on pilgrimage to Zion. The phrase is peculiar and *to Zion* must be supplied; but this is preferable to rendering *highways are in their hearts*, and explaining *highways* as a metaphor for right ways of life. The Targ., *in whose hearts is confidence*, is probably only a free paraphrase. Wellhausen would follow the LXX, and read *goings up*, i.e. pilgrimages. See Introd. p. xxix.

6. Passing through the vale of Baca they make it a place of springs,
Yea, the early rain clotheth it with blessings.

The word *Baca* is derived from the root which means *to weep*, but it nowhere means *weeping*, for which words of a different form are used. Here, as in 2 Sam. v. 23, it probably denotes some kind of balsam-tree, so called from the 'tears' of gum which it exudes. The vale of Baca or the balsam-trees was some vale which, like the vale of Elah or the terebinth (1 Sam. xvii. 2), and the vale of Shittim or acacias, took its name from the trees which grew there. Balsam-trees are said to love dry situations, growing plentifully for example in the arid valley of Mecca; and this is clearly the point of the reference. The vale of Baca was some waterless and barren valley through which pilgrims passed on their way to Jerusalem; but faith turns it into a place of springs, finding refreshment under the most untoward circumstances, while God refreshes them with showers of blessing from above, as the autumnal rains clothe the dry plains with grass and flowers. Cp. Is. xxxv. 1 ff., 6 ff.; xli. 18 ff.; and see Tristram's *Natural Hist. of the Bible*, pp. 30, 455, for a graphic description of the marvellous way in which the rains in Palestine transform the country from a brown and dusty desert to a lovely garden. Once more we have to note the singularly bold use of metaphor which is characteristic of this poet.

The familiar phrase 'the vale of tears' comes from the Vulg. *vallis lacrimarum*, and it is possible that such an allusion to the derivation of the word is intended. It is natural to regard the pilgrim's experience as a parable of the pilgrimage of life, but this secondary application must not be allowed to supersede the original meaning.

This verse has suffered a strange fate in translation. The English Versions follow Jewish authorities in taking *berāchōth* as the plural of *berēchāh*, 'a pool,' not, as it must be, of *berāchah*, 'blessing.' The LXX renders, *The lawgiver shall give blessings*, taking *mōreh* to be connected with *tōrāh*, law: and similarly Jerome, *The teacher shall be clothed with blessing*, a rendering followed by Luther.

7. *They go from strength to strength*] Instead of fainting on

Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.
8 O LORD God *of* hosts, hear my prayer:
Give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.
9 Behold, O God our shield,
And look upon the face of thine anointed.

their toilsome journey they gain fresh strength as they advance. Cp. Is. xl. 31, and for the form of expression, John i. 16; 2 Cor. iii. 18.

every one of them *in Zion*] Better as R.V., every one of them appeareth before God in Zion. The words *every one of them* are not in the original, but may legitimately be supplied, the use of the verb in the singular individualising the different members of the company.

The LXX read *El Elohim*, 'God of Gods,' for *El Elohim*, 'unto God,' and thence, through the Vulg., came Coverdale's rendering, *And so the God of Gods appeareth unto the in Sion.* The P.B.V., while giving the right construction to the Heb. sentence, has retained *God of Gods*.

appeareth before God] The technical term for visiting the sanctuary at the great Festivals. Cp. xlii. 2, note.

8. A prayer for favourable audience, uttered apparently by the Psalmist as the leader of the pilgrims on their arrival in the Temple.

9—12. The pilgrims' prayer, and the ground of their confidence.

9. The Psalmist's prayer for favourable audience in *v.* 8 is succeeded, after a musical interlude (*selah*), by a prayer offered by all the pilgrims together. Contrast '*our* shield' with '*my* prayer' (*v.* 8), and the singular which recurs in *v.* 10.

The first line admits of two renderings. (1) As in the A.V., 'our shield' may be taken as a vocative in apposition to God, Who is styled a shield in *v.* 11, and frequently elsewhere, e.g. iii. 3; xxviii. 7; lix. 11; Gen. xv. 1. (2) As in R.V. marg., *Behold our shield, O God*, 'our shield' may be taken as the object of the verb, in parallelism with and referring to 'thine anointed' in the next line. This rendering is commended by the parallelism, and not excluded by the order of the words in the original: the king is styled 'our shield' in lxxxix. 18 (R.V.), and there is nothing unnatural in the application in the same context of the same epithet to the king and to God, Whose representative the king was acknowledged to be.

look upon the face of thine anointed] Graciously accept him. But who is meant by *thine anointed*? Is it the king, the high-priest, or the people? Those who maintain that the Psalm is post-exilic suppose that the high-priest or the people is thus designated. But though the high-priest is called *the anointed priest* (Lev. iv. 3, 5, 16; vi. 22), he is never called *the anointed of Jehovah:* and it is very doubtful whether this title is ever applied to the people. Ps. lxxxix. 38 and Hab. iii. 13 are quoted, but do not establish the usage. The most natural explanation is that the king is meant. Nor is the prayer out of place. The welfare of the nation was bound up with the welfare of the king. And if the king was

For a day in thy courts *is* better than a thousand. 10
I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God,
Than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.
For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield: 11

one who like Hezekiah or Josiah had effected a great reformation, the Psalmist might well feel that the religious privileges which he prized depended upon the continuance of the king's life. It certainly cannot be inferred from the words that the Psalmist was himself a king, but rather the reverse.

10. *For a day* &c.] The connexion of thought is obscure. *For* apparently introduces a reason for the foregoing prayer. A 'good day,' i.e. a day of festivity and rejoicing, was regarded as a propitious occasion for preferring requests (1 Sam. xxv. 8). A day spent in Jehovah's courts was better than a thousand others, and therefore the most opportune occasion for this prayer. Some commentators connect this verse with *vv.* 1—7, taking *vv.* 8, 9 as parenthetical, and regard it as giving the reason for the desire to enter the Temple which is the dominant idea of the Psalm. But neither of these explanations is quite satisfactory, and the difficulty disappears if we render, Surely a day &c. After offering the prayer of *v.* 9 the Psalmist returns to the thought which inspires his song, the blessedness of approach to God in His house.

'*One* day' (P. B. V.) comes from the LXX through the Vulg.

I had rather be a doorkeeper] Lit., *be at the threshold.* Delitzsch thinks that this is an allusion to the office of the Korahites as "keepers of the thresholds of the tent" (1 Chron. ix. 19). If so, the reference must be to some subordinate position, and not to the distinguished office of "keeper of the threshold" (2 Kings xxii. 4; xxv. 18); for the sense clearly is, 'I had rather perform the humblest service at the temple of Him who tolerates no evil (v. 4) than be entertained as a guest where wickedness makes its home.' But the meaning may simply be, *I had rather stand*, or, *lie, at the threshold*, wait humbly at the gate as a suppliant. Cp. LXX, *παραριπτεῖσθαι*, Vulg. *abiectus esse.*

The tents of wickedness probably refers to the heathen neighbours of whose scoffing this Psalmist had had such a bitter experience (xlii. 3, 10). Cp. cxx. 5.

11. *a sun and shield*] R.V., A sun and a shield. Nowhere else in the O.T. is Jehovah directly called a sun, though the ideas conveyed by the metaphor are frequent. Cp. xxvii. 1; Is. x. 17; lx. 19, 20; Mal. iv. 2. Perhaps the prevalence of sun-worship in the East led to the avoidance of so natural and significant a metaphor. Even here the oldest Versions either had a different reading or shrank from a literal rendering. The LXX and Theodotion have: *For the Lord God loveth mercy and truth.* The Targ. paraphrases, *For the Lord God is like a high wall and a strong shield*, reading *shemesh* (=sun), but taking it in the sense of *battlement* (R.V. *pinnacles*) which it has in Is. liv. 12. The Syr. gives, *our sustainer and our helper.* Only the later Greek Versions and Jerome render the Massoretic text literally.

The LORD will give grace and glory:
No good *thing* will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.
12 O LORD of hosts,
Blessed *is* the man that trusteth in thee.

the LORD &c.] Favour (Gen. xxxix. 21), honour (lxxxv. 9; 1 Kings iii. 13), and prosperity (lxxxv. 12) are the reward of the spiritual. Cp. the parallel in Prov. iii. 33—35, which speaks of God's blessing on the habitation of the righteous, of His bestowal of favour on the lowly, and of the honour which is the inheritance of the wise. *Grace and glory* suggest to us ideas which were hardly in the Psalmist's mind, though his words include all divine blessings, and he would not have drawn the sharp distinction between temporal and spiritual things which we are accustomed to do. But the temporal blessings of the Old Covenant are the types of the spiritual blessings of the New; and the promise, like so many sayings in the Psalter, receives a larger sense and a spiritual meaning in the light of the Gospel. See Rom. v. 2; 1 Pet. v. 10.

them that walk uprightly] Making sincere devotion to God and perfect integrity in their dealings with men the rule of their lives. Cp. xv. 2, note; ci. 2, 6.

12. *O LORD of hosts*] The addition of *God* in P. B. V., as in v. 8, comes from the Roman or unrevised Latin Psalter (see p. lxxii), and is found in some MSS. of the LXX.

PSALM LXXXV.

The restoration of Israel from exile is a proof that God has forgiven His people and taken them back into favour as He promised (Jer. xxxiii. 8 ff.). Yet the present condition of Israel seems to shew that God's anger still rests upon it. Only a feeble remnant has returned. Disappointment and disaster are crushing them. The national life has not revived. The great hopes held out by the prophets, especially in Is. xl–lxvi, in connexion with the Return, have not been realised. And therefore the nation prays for a fresh manifestation of God's saving power to gladden His people (1—7).

Listening for an answer the Psalmist receives the assurance that God's purposes of good toward His faithful people will surely be fulfilled. He will dwell among them and bless them, fulfilling the prophetic promises of the establishment of His kingdom among men (8—13).

Such is the argument of the Psalm; and we can hardly be wrong in referring it to the early days of the Return from Babylon. The best illustration of it is to be found in the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, especially in Zech. i. 12 ff., and with this period (c. B.C. 520) it should be connected, rather than with the time of Nehemiah. It was written to meet the depression and despondency which were rapidly crushing the life out of the feeble church of the restoration, with the assurance that the prophetic promises of a glorious Messianic future were not a

delusion, but that God would establish His kingdom in His land. Thought and language shew familiarity with Is. xl - lxvi.

The Psalm falls into two divisions, (i) the pleading of mercies already received (1—3) as the ground of prayer (4—7), and (ii) the answer of hope (8—13): and it has been suggested that the first part was to be sung by the people, the second by the priest. At any rate *vv.* 1—7 may express the thoughts of the people; *vv.* 8—13 the inspired conviction of some 'soul of nobler tone,' prophet or priest, who wrote the Psalm.

The appropriateness of this Psalm as one of the Proper Psalms for Christmas Day is obvious. It is full of Messianic hopes. The Incarnation is the true answer to the prayer of Israel: and in Christ almost every word of the second part finds its fulfilment. The message of peace (Luke ii. 14), the nearness of salvation (Matt. i. 21; Luke ii. 30 ff.), the divine glory dwelling in the earth (Luke ii. 32; John i. 14), the union of lovingkindness and truth, of righteousness and peace (John i. 17; Rom. v. 1), the advent of God preceded by righteousness making a way for His people to walk in:—these blessings were imparted in Christ in a fulness and a reality far transcending anything that the Psalmist could have anticipated.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: 85
Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.
Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, 2
Thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.
Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: 3
Thou hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of thine anger.

1—3. God has forgiven and restored His people.

1. *thou hast been favourable*] Thou art propitiated: once more Thou graciously acceptest Thy people, and receivest them back into Thy favour. The ban of Jer. xiv. 10, 12 is removed. Cp. lxxvii. 7; cvi. 4; Haggai i. 8.

thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob] Or, as R.V. marg., *returned to*. But more probably the phrase means, thou hast turned the fortune of Jacob. See note on liii. 6. Here doubtless the restoration of the nation from the Babylonian exile is meant.

2. The Heb. words describe sin (1) as depravity or moral distortion; (2) as a wandering from the way, or missing the mark; and forgiveness (1) as the removal of a burden, (2) as the covering of the offence, which would otherwise meet the eye of the judge and call for punishment. Cp. xxxii. 1, 2, 5.

3. *Thou hast taken away*] Lit. *withdrawn*, or *drawn in*, the wrath which was let loose against us.

from the fierceness of thine anger] Poured out upon Israel for its sin. See Jer. xxx. 24; Lam. i. 12; iv. 11. Cp. Ex. xxxii. 12.

4 Turn us, O God of our salvation,
And cause thine anger towards us to cease.
5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?
Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?
6 Wilt thou not revive us again:
That thy people may rejoice in thee?
7 Shew us thy mercy, O LORD,
And grant us thy salvation.

8 I will hear what God the LORD will speak:
For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints:

4—7. Yet in spite of forgiveness and restoration, much is still lacking. Oh that God would wholly withdraw His wrath, and gladden His people with a full salvation! Cp. the prayer of cxxvi. 4.

4. *Turn us*] I.e. Restore us. Cp. lxxx. 3. For R.V. marg. *Turn to us*, cp. Is. lxiii. 17; but the rendering of the text is preferable.

cause thine anger &c.] Lit. *break thy thine indignation with us:* cease to be provoked with us. The cognate verb is constantly used of Israel's 'provocation' of Jehovah (e.g. Jer. vii. 18 ff.).

5. For the pleading question cp. lxxvii. 7 ff.

wilt thou draw out &c.] I.e. prolong, prolong, continue thine anger to one generation after another (lxxvii. 8).

6. *Wilt thou not revive us again*] Wilt not THOU turn and quicken us? restoring our national life according to the promises of the prophets. See Hos. vi. 2; Hab. ii. 4; Ezek. xxxvii. 3 ff. Cp. Ps. lxxi. 20; lxxx. 18. THOU is emphatic. THOU Who alone canst, THOU Who art pledged to it by Thy word.

7. *Shew us* &c.] *Cause us to see thy lovingkindness*, upon which we have a claim as Thy beloved ones (*v.* 8).

8—13. The Psalmist listens for Jehovah's answer to His people's prayer; and conveys to them the assurance that rich abundance of blessing is in store for those who fear Him.

8. *I will hear*] Or, *Let me hear.* Cp. lxii. 11; and the striking parallel in Hab. ii. 1, which the LXX makes even closer by its reading, *what the Lord God will speak with me* (lit. *in me*), from which comes the P.B.V., *what the Lord God will say concerning me.*

God the LORD] The mighty God (*El*), Jehovah.

he will speak &c.] Or, he speaketh peace. He will not always be wroth, but will forthwith utter the 'thoughts of peace' which He has all along cherished (Jer. xxix. 11). This reconciliation must result in the welfare of His people. Cp. cxxii. 6 ff.; and for the phrase, Zech. ix. 10.

and to his saints] Or, *even to:* for 'his saints' are synonymous with 'his people.' It is as the objects of His lovingkindness (*v.* 7) not for any merits of their own, that they look for His favour. For the meaning of 'saints' see note on l. 5, and Appendix, Note i.

But let them not turn *again* to folly.
Surely his salvation *is* nigh them that fear him; 9
That glory may dwell in our land.
Mercy and truth are met together; 10
Righteousness and peace have kissed *each other.*
Truth shall spring out of the earth; 11
And righteousness shall look down from heaven.

but let them not turn again *to folly*] The folly of self-confidence (xlix. 13) leading to unbelief and disobedience, which has been the cause of their past misfortunes. Such a note of warning is not out of place, but the reading of the LXX, *and to those who turn their heart to him*, is preferred by some editors.

9. The Psalmist expands the results of that word of peace.

them that fear him] Those who answer to their calling as 'saints.' Cp. ciii. 11, 13, 17.

that glory may dwell in our land] 'Glory' is the manifest Presence of Jehovah, which Ezekiel saw departing from the doomed city (x. 18), but returning to it in the glorious restoration (xliii. 4 ff.). Cp. Is. lx. 1, 2; Zech. ii. 5. 'Dwell' is the word specially used of the abiding of God among His people, from which later Heb. derived the term *Shechinah* for the Presence of God in the Tabernacle and Temple (Ex. xl. 34, 35; 2 Chr. vii. 1—3). Comp. Zech. ii. 10, 11; viii. 3. The promise of the words was to be fulfilled in the Incarnation (John i. 14).

The meaning 'honour' in contrast to the shame and humiliation which are now Israel's portion is inadequate, though this may be included as a result of the return of that greater Glory.

10. Does this verse speak of the *divine attributes* which conspire together in the work of salvation, or of the *human virtues* which will characterise the new community? Primarily of the former. God's lovingkindness and truth—the love which moved Him to enter into covenant with Israel, and the faithfulness which binds Him to be true to His covenant—meet in Israel's redemption. Righteousness and peace greet one another with joyous welcome. Jehovah is a righteous God and therefore a Saviour (Is. xlv. 21). Because salvation is His eternal purpose and He cannot change His purpose, therefore He reconciles His people to Himself. For lovingkindness and truth as attributes of God—often as here almost personified as ministering angels—see Ex. xxxiv. 6; Ps. xxv. 10; xl. 11; lvii. 3, 10; lxi. 7; lxxxvi. 15; lxxxix. 14; cxv. 1; cxxxviii. 2; Mic. vii. 20. For the connexion of 'righteousness' with salvation see on lxv. 5, and note the frequency of this thought in Is. xl. ff.

While however divine attributes are primarily meant, the corresponding human virtues (Prov. iii. 3; Is. xxxii. 16 f.) need not be excluded. The restored community will reflect the attributes of God to which it owes its existence. Cp. Hos. ii. 19, 20; Zech. viii. 8, 16, 19. This thought is more clearly brought out in the next verse.

11. **Truth springeth out of the earth;**
And righteousness hath looked down from heaven. (R.V.)

12 Yea, the LORD shall give *that which is* good;
And our land shall yield her increase.
13 Righteousness shall go before him;
And shall set *us* in the way of his steps.

Truth springs up as a natural growth in response to God's manifestation of His saving righteousness. Harmony between earth and heaven is perfected. Cp. Hos. ii. 21 ff.: Is. xlv. 8. Milton must have had this passage in his mind in the *Ode on the Nativity:*

Yea, truth and justice then
Will down return to men,
Orb'd in a rainbow; and, like glories wearing,
Mercy will sit between,
Throned in celestial sheen,
With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering;
And heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace hall.

12. Material prosperity will go hand in hand with moral progress. Earth responds to the divine blessing. Cp. Lev. xxvi. 4; Deut. xxviii. 12; Ps. lxvii. 6. The fruitfulness of the land is a constant feature in pictures of the Messianic future; and point is given to the promise by the fact that the returned exiles had been suffering from scarcity (Haggai i. 10 f.).

13. Jehovah Himself appears to lead His people forward. Before Him as a herald goes the righteousness which moves Him to the salvation of His people; and (it) shall make his footsteps a way (to walk in): so that His people may follow without let or hindrance; an allusion possibly to the 'way' so often spoken of in the later chapters of Isaiah (xxxv. 8; xlii. 16; xlviii. 17; xlix. 11; li. 10; lvii. 14; lxii. 10). The words are obscure, but this rendering, adopted by R.V., is the best. Other renderings are; (1) *and shall set* its footsteps *in the way of his footsteps*, i.e. follow Him closely, cp. Is. lviii. 8; lii. 12; or, (2) which gives a similar sense, *shall give heed to the way of his footsteps;* or (3) *and shall set its footsteps in the way*, march forward freely and unrestrainedly, in contrast to the gloomy picture of Is. lix. 14; or (4) *shall set his footsteps in the way*, move God to march forth in saving might.

PSALM LXXXVI.

This Psalm is a mosaic of fragments from other Psalms and scriptures[1]. It claims no poetic originality, yet it possesses a pathetic

[1] The references are given in the notes. Pss. xxv, xxvi, xxvii, xl, liv are quoted almost verbatim. Pss. v, vi (?), ix, xvii, xxii, xxviii, xxxi, l (?), lv, lvi, lvii, lxxii, lxxvii, cxvi, cxxx (?) seem to have been laid under contribution, though where the language is general, it is impossible to say that it is derived from one Ps. rather than another. The use of the two groups xxv—xxviii, liv—lvii is noticeable.

Of other books, Ex. xxxiv. 6 is quoted verbatim: and the Psalmist seems to be further indebted to Ex. xv. 11; Deut. iii. 24; xxviii. 58; xxxii. 22; Is. xxiv. 15 (?); xlix. 8, 13; Jer. xxxii. 39.

earnestness and tender grace of its own. It is distinguished by the seven times repeated use of *Adonai*, 'Lord,' in addressing God, a title which expresses the consciousness of specially belonging to God, of standing under His immediate guidance and protection. To this title corresponds the Psalmist's designation of himself as God's servant, and the son of His handmaid (*v.* 16, cp. *vv.* 3, 4). The Psalm furnishes at least one noble phrase which is unique (*v.* 11 *b*), and in *v.* 9 it rises to a height of Messianic hope not surpassed elsewhere. It is the composition of some pious soul whose mind was steeped with the scriptures already in existence, and who recast reminiscences of them into a prayer to suit his own particular needs. Primarily it appears to be an expression of personal devotion, rather than a prayer for the use of the congregation; though sometimes perhaps the Psalmist identifies himself with the community of which he is a member, and speaks of its circumstances and needs as his own (*vv.* 13, 14).

It is the only Psalm in the Third Book which has the name of David prefixed to it. The title *A Prayer of David* can only mean that it is an imitation of the *Prayers of David* (lxxii. 20), and was probably never intended to mean more than this. It cannot have been written till after the Return from the Captivity (to which *v.* 13 may be an allusion), but at what period there is nothing to shew. The author apparently had the Elohistic collection in his hands as revised by its editor (*Introd.* p. lvi), for he quotes Ps. liv. 3 in *v.* 14 in the Elohistic form.

One thought leads to another and no definite structural arrangement can be traced in the Psalm. It may perhaps be divided as follows.

i. A series of petitions, each followed by some reason which the Psalmist urges for the hearing of his prayer (1—5).

ii. Renewing his supplication, he finds a ground of confidence in the incomparable nature of God, which suggests the thought of the universal homage which will one day be offered to Him as the only true God (6—10).

iii. Prayers for guidance and vows of thanksgiving lead on to the description of present dangers. Pleading God's revealed character as a God of lovingkindness, he prays for further blessing, and such a clear token of God's favour as may prove to his enemies that he is under God's protection (11—17).

A Prayer of David.

Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: 86
For I *am* poor and needy.

1—5. A series of petitions, each supported by the ground on which the Psalmist pleads for a hearing.

1. *Bow down* &c.] A common form of invocation. Cp. xvii. 6; xxxi. 2; Is. xxxvii. 17; &c. *hear me*] Answer me (lv. 2).

for I am *poor and needy*] Or, afflicted and needy: and therefore one of those whom God has specially promised to help (xii. 5). From xl. 17 (=lxx. 5): cp. cix. 22.

2 Preserve my soul; for I *am* holy:
O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.
3 Be merciful unto me, O Lord:
For I cry unto thee daily.
4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant:
For unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.
5 For thou, Lord, *art* good, and ready to forgive;
And plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.
6 Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer;
And attend to the voice of my supplications.
7 In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee:
For thou wilt answer me.
8 Among the gods *there is* none like unto thee, O Lord;
Neither *are there any works* like unto thy works.
9 All nations whom thou hast made shall come

2. *Preserve my soul*] = xxv. 20.

for I am *holy*] R.V. godly fails to bring out the connexion of the word with *chesed*, 'lovingkindness' (*vv.* 5, 13, 15). Cheyne gives *duteous in love*. But the passive sense *beloved*, 'the object of thy lovingkindness,' is far more suitable. He pleads not his own merits, but the covenant relation into which God has brought him as an Israelite. See on l. 5; lxxxv. 8.

3. Be gracious unto me, O Lord;
For unto thee do I cry all the day long.

See lvii. 1, 2, and elsewhere (iii. 4; iv. 1; &c.).

4. *Rejoice* &c.] Cp. xc. 15.

for unto thee &c.] From xxv. 1. God alone is the object of his desires, his aspirations, his prayers. Cp. cxliii. 8; Lam. iii. 41.

5. *ready to forgive*] The exact word is found only here, but for the thought see Ps. cxxx. 4; and for the whole verse cp. Ex. xxxiv. 6 f.

6—10. Renewed supplication for a hearing. The Psalmist is sure of an answer, for Jehovah is the only true God, Whom all nations will one day acknowledge.

6. Taken from lv. 1, 2; v. 2; xxviii. 2; cp. cxxx. 2.

attend] R.V. hearken.

7. From lxxvii. 2; xvii. 6.

8. There is none like thee among the gods, O Lord;
And there is nought like thy works.

Based upon Ex. xv. 11, which is frequently imitated elsewhere; and Deut. iii. 24. In *v.* 5 the Psalmist dwelt on God's *willingness* to answer prayer; here he comforts himself with the thought of His *ability*. His is the power possessed by none of those who are called gods and worshipped as such.

9. Apparently a reminiscence of Ps. xxii. 27, combined possibly

And worship before thee, O Lord;
And shall glorify thy name.
For thou *art* great, and doest wondrous *things:* 10
Thou *art* God alone.
Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: 11
Unite my heart to fear thy name.
I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: 12
And I will glorify thy name for evermore.
For great *is* thy mercy toward me: 13
And thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.
O God, the proud are risen against me, 14

with Is. xxiv. 15 ('glorify ye...the name of Jehovah') and other passages. But the verse is remarkable for the distinctness and fulness of its Messianic hope, and for the thought implied in the words *whom thou hast made*, that the nations cannot fail ultimately to fulfil the will of their Creator (Rev. iv. 11). It is taken up and expanded in Rev. xv. 3, 4.

10. Cp. lxxvii. 13, 14; lxxii. 18; lxxxiii. 18; and Ex. xv. 11; xxxiv. 10.

11. *Teach me thy way, O LORD*] Word for word from xxvii. 11.

I will walk in thy truth] When Thou dost teach me Thy way. From xxvi. 3.

unite my heart to fear thy name] Let it be no longer divided between Thee and other attractions; let all its powers and affections be concentrated in reverence to Thee as Thou hast revealed Thyself in the works of creation and in acts of redemption. The unity and uniqueness of God demand unity of heart in His worshippers (Deut. vi. 4, 5; x. 12). Such singleheartedness is frequently expressed by the phrases 'a whole heart,' 'a perfect heart,' but the verb *unite* is found here only in this sense. Doubtless it is an allusion to the promise in Jer. xxxii. 39, "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever." Cp. too Deut. xxviii. 58.

The LXX and Syr. read the consonants with different vowels (*yichad* for *yachēd*), *let my heart rejoice to fear thy name.*

12, 13. Cp. lvii. 9, 10; ix. 1; l. 15, 23.

with all my heart] R.V. with my whole heart; when the prayer of *v.* 11 is granted.

thy mercy] **Thy lovingkindness.**

and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell] **From the nethermost Sheol.** From lvi. 13 (=cxvi. 8); Deut. xxxii. 22. Deliverance from imminent danger of death may be meant; yet here the Psalmist may identify himself with the nation, and refer to its deliverance from the death of the exile. Cp. lxxxv. 6.

14. Again, though the Psalmist may be referring to personal circumstances, it is not impossible that he is alluding to dangers by which the community was threatened. The verse is taken almost word for word from liv. 3, with perhaps a reminiscence of xxii. 16 ('*assembly* of evil

And the assemblies of violent *men* have sought after my soul;
And have not set thee before them.
15 But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious,
Longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.
16 O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me;
Give thy strength unto thy servant,
And save the son of thine handmaid.
17 Shew me a token for good;
That they which hate me may see *it*, and be ashamed:
Because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

doers'). The variation *proud* for *strangers* may be accidental: the consonants of the two words ZEDÍM and ZARIM are easily confused, D (ד) and R (ר) being much alike in Hebrew. It should be noted that Ps. liv. is quoted in its 'Elohistic' form, so that apparently the collection had already been made and edited by the Elohistic editor.

assemblies] **Assembly, or congregation.**

15. Word for word from Ex. xxxiv. 6. With his proud and merciless enemies he contrasts the revealed character of God, as the ground of the prayer which follows. Though he may have deserved punishment, God cannot surely abandon him to them.

longsuffering] Or, **slow to anger** (R.V.).

16. *O turn* &c.] From xxv. 16.

have mercy upon me] Render, **be gracious unto me**, to shew the connexion with the attribute 'gracious' in *v.* 15.

thy servant...the son of thine handmaid] Cp. cxvi. 16. 'The son of thine handmaid' is a synonym for 'thy servant,' denoting a closer relationship, for servants 'born in the house' (Gen. xiv. 14) were the most trusted dependents. Cp. "of the household of God," Eph. ii. 19. It has been conjectured that the Psalmist, like Samuel, was early dedicated to the service of God; but the words do not necessarily convey this meaning.

17. *a token for good*] Some visible and unmistakable sign of Thy favour towards me. Cp. Jer. xxiv. 6; Ezra viii. 22; Neh. v. 19; xiii. 31.

that they &c.] **That they which hate me may be ashamed when they see that thou** &c. Cp. xl. 3; vi. 10; xxxv. 4: and for *holpen... comforted*, Is. xlix. 8, 13.

PSALM LXXXVII.

This Psalm is fittingly placed here, for it expands the thought of lxxxvi. 9 in the style and the spirit of prophecy. It is terse, abrupt, enigmatic, like a prophetic oracle; in its breadth of view and fulness of Messianic hope it vies with the grandest of prophetic utterances. It

depicts Zion as the metropolis of the universal kingdom of God, into which all nations are adopted as citizens. The franchise of Zion is conferred upon them as though it were theirs by right of birth. It stands alone in the peculiar form in which the idea is embodied, though many prophecies lead up to it. See especially Is. ii. 2—4 (= Mic. iv. 1—3); Is. xi. 10; xviii. 7; xix. 19 ff.; xliv. 5; lx. 1 ff.; Zeph. ii. 11; iii. 9, 10; Zech. ii. 11; viii. 20—23. Like Isaiah (xix. 24 f.) the poet sees the most inveterate foes of the kingdom of God acknowledging His sovereignty; he sees nations the most bitterly antagonistic to Israel, the most diametrically opposed in character to the true spirit of Israel, the most remote from the influence of Israel, brought into harmony with Israel, and adopted into its commonwealth.

Thus the Psalm is a prediction of the incorporation of all nations into the Church of Christ, and the establishment of the new and universal nationality of the kingdom of God. It is a prophecy in O.T. language of "the Jerusalem that is above, which is our mother" (Gal. iv. 26). It looks forward to the time when the Gentiles shall no longer be "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel" but "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. ii. 12, 19). We must not indeed read the full Christian idea of the new birth into the words "This one was born there," for primarily they refer to nations not to individuals; yet we may see in them a foreshadowing of the truth that a new birth is requisite for entrance into the kingdom of God (John iii. 3 ff.).

The Psalm has been assigned, with considerable plausibility, to the age of Hezekiah. (1) The same loving enthusiasm for Zion, and the same hopes of the conversion of the nations, meet us in the Psalms and prophecies of that period. See especially Pss. xlvi, xlvii, xlviii, lxxvi; Is. xix. 24 f. (2) 'Rahab' is Isaiah's name for Egypt (xxx. 7, R.V.), which was a leading power at the time; Babylon was brought into contact with Judah (Is. xxxix); the Philistines had been subjugated by Hezekiah (2 Kings xviii. 8); the Ethiopians were coming into notice (Is. xviii; xxxvii. 9); and after the retreat of Sennacherib many nations sent congratulatory embassies to Hezekiah with gifts for the Temple (2 Chron. xxxii. 23).

On the other hand the parallels of thought and language with the later part of the book of Isaiah (especially xliv. 5; lx. 1 ff.) and Zechariah, are not less striking; and the mention of Babylon rather than Assyria points to a date after that power had taken the place of Assyria as the mistress of Western Asia. Egypt, the ancient enemy, and Babylon, the recent oppressor, are named as the typical foes of God's people. It seems best then to suppose that the Psalm was written (like Ps. lxxxv) after the Return from Babylon, to cheer the drooping spirits of those returned exiles who were in danger of being utterly disheartened by the disappointing contrast between the weakness and insignificance of their little community, and the grandeur and magnificence of the prophetic promises of the future glory and greatness of Zion. In poetic language and with prophetic authority it reasserts the fundamental truths of Jehovah's choice of Zion, and of Zion's destiny in relation to the nations. Never had such encouragement been more needed; never was such a faith more clearly the fruit of divine inspiration.

The Psalm consists of two stanzas with a concluding verse.

i. Zion is the city of God, founded and beloved by Him, the heir of glorious promises (1—3).

ii. God proclaims that it is His will to reconcile her ancient enemies to Himself and incorporate them as her citizens. Zion shall be the mother-city of the nations of the world (4—6).

iii. A picture of the rejoicing of those who find in her the source of every joy (7).

A Psalm *or* Song for the sons of Korah.

87 His foundation *is* in the holy mountains.
2 The LORD loveth the gates of Zion
More than all the dwellings of Jacob.

1—3. The glory of Zion the city of God.

1. The Psalmist's heart is full of his theme. He states it abruptly in a verse of a single line (cp. xviii. 1):

'Tis his foundation upon the holy mountains:

which stands by itself as a kind of title to his poem or inscription on his picture. Zion is a city founded by God Himself (Is. xiv. 32). Its site is consecrated (ii. 6; xliii. 3; xlviii. 1, and often) by the ownership and presence of Jehovah.

The plural *mountains* (cp. cxxxiii. 3) may be merely poetical, or it may refer to the different hills upon which Jerusalem stood, or generally to the mountainous region in which it was situated. "Jerusalem was on the ridge, the broadest and most strongly marked ridge of the backbone of the complicated hills, which extend through the whole country from the Desert to the plain of Esdraelon." Like Rome and Constantinople, it stood upon a "multiplicity of eminences," and "the peculiarity imparted to its general aspect and to its history by these various heights is incontestable." Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 176, 177. Comp. note on xlviii. 2.

The brevity and abruptness of the verse have led some commentators to conjecture that the first line has been lost, and others to combine *vv.* 1, 2 in construction (cp. R.V. marg.) thus:

His foundation upon the holy mountains doth Jehovah love,
Yea, the gates of Zion &c.

The conjecture is unnecessary, and though the combination of *vv.* 1, 2 would give a good parallelism, the Ancient Versions support the division of the Massoretic Text, and the abrupt beginning is in accordance with the terse oracular style of the Psalm.

P.B.V. '*her* foundation' is untenable. The gender of the pronoun in the Heb. shews that it cannot refer to the city.

2. *the gates of Zion*] A poetical expression for the city, specially appropriate with reference to the thought of the crowd of pilgrims (cxxii. 2) entering it from all nations (Is. lx. 11; Rev. xxii. 14).

more than all the dwellings of Jacob] Better than any of the other cities of Israel, though they too are goodly (Num. xxiv. 5, where the same word is rendered 'tabernacles').

Glorious *things* are spoken of thee, 3
O city of God. Selah.

I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that 4
know me:
Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia;
This *man* was born there.
And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in 5
her:

3. *Glorious* things *are spoken of thee*] This need not be limited to the utterance of vv. 4 ff., but may include the great prophetic promises generally, such as Is. ii. 2 ff., xi. 10, xix. 20 ff.; and, if the Psalm is post-exilic, lx. 1 ff. *O city of God*] Of His choice, His love, His care. Cp. xlvi. 4; xlviii. 1, 2, 8.

4—6. The nations of the world shall be enrolled as Zion's children; and Zion shall be glorified by this accession of unnumbered fresh citizens.

4. God Himself is the speaker (cp. lx. 6 ff.). **I will make mention** of, solemnly and publicly acknowledge, **Rahab and Babylon, as among them that know me**, that own Me as their God and worship Me. Cp. xxxvi. 10; ix. 10; v. 11; Is. xix. 21. *Rahab*[1] is a nickname for Egypt (Is. xxx. 7; li. 9; Ps. lxxxix. 10). It may have been the name of some mythological sea-monster (Job xxvi. 12, ix. 13, R.V.) chosen as an emblem of Egypt (cp. Is. li. 9), or it may simply mean 'Arrogance.' Its use here is significant: the ferocious monster is tamed; the blustering antagonist is reconciled.

Behold &c.] God points as it were to each of these nations in succession and says, **This one was born there**, namely in Zion. By this divine edict each of them is invested with the full rights and privileges of citizenship as though they had been born in Zion.

It is God's purpose to reconcile all nations to Himself. Egypt, the world-power of the South, the ancient and hereditary enemy of God's people; Babylon, the world-power of the North, the cruel oppressor of later times; warlike Philistia, by which Israel had so often been harassed; proud Tyre, the haughty representative of commerce and wealth; distant Ethiopia, famous for its stalwart warriors (Is. xviii. 7); —all will be brought to recognise Jehovah as their God; all shall be incorporated into the commonwealth of Israel (Eph. ii. 12). The thought is the same as that of Is. xix. 24, 25, though it is expressed in different language.

5. The Psalmist speaks, echoing the divine decree from Zion's point of view, dwelling upon the honour which will accrue to Zion by this accession of citizens.

[1] It may be noted that this name is differently spelt in Hebrew from *Rahab* in Josh. ii. 1 ff., and is derived from a different root. This is *Rāhāb*, that *Rāchāb*.

And the Highest himself shall establish her.

6 The LORD shall count, when he writeth *up* the people,
That this *man* was born there. Selah.

7 As well the singers as the players on instruments *shall be there:*
All my springs *are* in thee.

Yea, of Zion it shall be said,
Each and every one was born in her;
And the Most High himself shall establish her.

Not merely certain specified nations but all the nations shall call Zion their mother-city. One after another comes to be reckoned among her children[1]. Grammatically it is possible to understand *each and every one* of individuals, but the context is decisive in favour of taking this verse to refer to nations, as *vv.* 4 and 6 do. Each nation, reckoned as a whole, receives the right of citizenship. Individuals receive it as members of their nation.

The LXX and some other Ancient Versions render *hath founded her*: but *shall establish her*, as xlviii. 8, is certainly right. Under the protection and blessing of the Sovereign Ruler of the world she grows ever stronger and nobler as each fresh nation joins the universal kingdom of God.

6. **Jehovah shall reckon, when he registers the peoples,**
'This one was born there.'

Jehovah holds His census of the nations, and writes their names down in His book. One after another of them He registers as 'born in Zion.' It is the official confirmation of their rights of citizenship. Allusions to the registers of citizens are found in lxix. 28; Is. iv. 3; Ezek. xiii. 9; and the importance attached to genealogical registers appears in Ezra ii. 62.

7. Conclusion. The Psalm ends as abruptly as it began, with a verse which is enigmatic in its brevity. It is best explained as an outline picture of the universal rejoicing with which the citizens of Zion greet their mother.

And singing as well as dancing (shall they chant),
'All my fountains are in thee.'

The rendering *dancing* is preferable to *playing on the flute* (cp. A.V., R.V. marg.). For dancing as an expression of religious rejoicing see xxx. 11; cxlix. 3; cl. 4; Ex. xv. 20; 2 Sam. vi. 16.

The second line is their anthem. It may even be a fragment of some well-known hymn. *My fountains* is to be understood metaphorically, as 'fountains of salvation' in Is. xii. 3. Cp. Ps. xxxvi. 9 f.; lxxxiv. 6; Ezek. xlvii. 1; Joel iii. 18; Zech. xiv. 8. It is possible, but less satisfactory, to take the verse as the Psalmist's apostrophe to Zion:

Both they that sing and they that dance,
All my fountains are in thee:

[1] The reading of the LXX, though due apparently simply to a textual error in the Greek (μήτηρ for μητι, Vulg. *numquid*), catches the spirit of the Psalm too strikingly to be passed over: *O Mother Sion, shall a man say.*

"meaning that every source of pleasure, music, singing, &c. was to be found in Zion" (Bp Perowne). So Milton in his paraphrase:

> Both they who sing and they who dance
> With sacred songs are there;
> In thee fresh brooks and soft streams glance,
> And all my fountains clear.

The obscurity of the verse must however be acknowledged. Cheyne thinks that it may be "a fragment of a description of a joyous procession." Cp. lxviii. 25. Is it possible that it is not, strictly speaking, part of the Psalm, but a liturgical direction to sing the anthem "All my fountains are in thee" at the end of the Psalm, as an expression of the joy of Zion's citizens?

PSALM LXXXVIII.

This is the saddest Psalm in the whole Psalter. It is a pathetic cry of hopeless despair in the midst of unrelieved suffering. In other Psalms the light breaks through the clouds at last: here the gloom is deepest at the close. It is characteristic that the last word is *darkness*.

Is the Psalmist describing his own personal experience, or does he speak in the name of the nation? There is much to be said for the view that the speaker is Israel in exile, "lamenting its exclusion from the light of its Lord's Presence." Possibly, as may be the case in Lam. iii, the community identifies itself with the typical sufferer Job, and borrows his language to describe its sufferings. So the Psalm is interpreted in the Targum, which paraphrases *v.* 6, "Thou hast placed me in exile which is like the nether pit"; and in the Syriac Version, which prefixes the title, "Concerning the people which was in Babylon."

But while the Psalm was doubtless so *applied* in liturgical use, there is nothing in it which demands the national interpretation, and much which it is most natural to regard as primarily personal: and it seems best to regard it as springing out of the personal experience of some heavily afflicted saint. He had been, it would seem, a victim of the painful and loathsome disease of leprosy from his childhood. Life had been for him a living death. He stood on the brink of the grave: nay, though still alive on earth, he seemed to have been plunged into the darkness of Sheol. Banished from society, he could have no part in the joys of life; excluded from the Temple, he could have no share in the worship which was the outward and visible sign of God's covenant with His people. The wrath of God seemed to be resting upon him. Nor could he look forward to a life through death in which his soul "delivered from the burden of the flesh" would be "in joy and felicity." Death, as it then seemed, must sever the covenant relation between God and His people. Sheol was the land of oblivion, where neither He remembered them, nor they remembered Him. Still less could he console himself with the hope of a joyful resurrection.

Such a Psalm brings home to us, as no other does, a sense of the shadow which rested upon the life of ancient Israel, and of the preciousness of the revelation of eternal life in Jesus Christ (Heb. ii. 14, 15). It

is moreover a noble example of a faith which trusts God utterly in spite of all discouragement, and cleaves to God most passionately when God seems to have withdrawn Himself most completely.

The Psalm presents many parallels with similar Psalms, with the Book of Lamentations, and with the Book of Job, with which the author must have been familiar, and from which he borrows language for the portraiture of his own sufferings. Who he was, it is idle to speculate. Uzziah in his leprosy, Hezekiah in his sickness, Jeremiah in his dungeon, have been suggested. Ingenious, but improbable, is the conjecture of Delitzsch, that Heman the Ezrahite, in conjunction with other sages of Solomon's time, was the author of the Book of Job, and that in this Psalm he records his personal experiences, which are there expanded in a dramatic form.

The Psalm may be analysed as follows:

i. After an introductory invocation the Psalmist pleads the intensity of his sufferings, if so be he may move God to pity. He is at the point of death; nay already counted as a dead man; deserted by his friends; plunged as it were into the very depths of Sheol by the visitation of God's wrath (1—8).

ii. He has no hope in life. Yet he has continued instant in prayer. Can God display His power and love in the unseen world? Nay, that is incredible (9—12).

iii. Still he casts himself upon God. Why does God reject him, and drive him to distraction by the terrors of His wrath, hemming him in and isolating him so that no ray of sympathy relieves the misery of his life (13—18)?

The Psalm is appointed as a Proper Psalm for Good Friday, doubtless because the Ancient Fathers interpreted it, like Ps. xxii, as the utterance of the suffering Christ.

The title is composite. The first half, **A song, a Psalm of the sons of Korah**, unless it is a mere accidental repetition of the title of Ps. lxxxvii, indicates that it was taken from the Korahite collection. The second half, **For the Chief Musician: set to Mahalath Leannoth. Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite**, gives the musical setting and traditional authorship. *Leannoth* may mean 'for singing antiphonally'; but more probably *Mahalath Leannoth*, i.e. 'sickness to afflict' is the title of the melody to which the Psalm was to be sung, which may or may not have been identical with that called *Mahalath* in the title of Ps. liii. On *Maschil* see *Introd.* p. xix.

The designation of Heman and Ethan as Ezrahites in the titles of this and the following Psalm is perplexing.

(i) In 1 Kings iv. 31, Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol, and Darda are named as famous sages, whose wisdom was surpassed by that of Solomon. In 1 Chron. ii. 6, we have the same four names (for *Dara* is an obvious error of transcription for *Darda*) given as sons or descendants of Zerah. It is natural to infer that the patronymic *Ezrahite* means, as it may legitimately do, 'of the family of Zerah.' Heman and Ethan consequently belonged to the tribe of Judah. It is not stated whether the four sages of 1 Kings iv. 31 were contemporary with Solomon or not. The comparison would be more forcible if they

were the most famous sages of all past time known to the historian. But on the other hand it need not be supposed that they were literally sons of Zerah, for 'sons' in genealogical language frequently means 'descendants,' and in 1 Kings they (or at least the last three of them) are called 'the sons of Mahol.'

(ii) In 1 Chron. xv. 17, 19 Heman and Ethan appear along with Asaph as leaders of the Temple music. Heman, who was a Korahite, represented the family of Kohath; Asaph that of Gershom; Ethan that of Merari. In 1 Chron. xxv. 5 Heman is called "the king's seer," and from a comparison of 1 Chron. xvi. 41, 42; xxv. 1 ff. with xv. 17, 19 it has been inferred that Ethan was also called Jeduthun.

It is certainly natural to suppose that the famous musicians are meant here, and that these Psalms were traditionally ascribed to them, or were in some way connected with the guilds or choirs which bore their names, as the Psalms of Asaph were connected with the guild or choir of Asaph. Accordingly various attempts have been made to explain how Levites could also be called Ezrahites. It has been conjectured that they were Judahites who had been adopted into the Levitical guild, or Levites, who as dwelling in the territory assigned to the family of Zerah were reckoned to belong to that family (cp. Judg. xvii. 7). But these conjectures are precarious, and it seems most probable that Heman and Ethan the musicians have been wrongly identified with their namesakes the famous sages.

A Song *or* Psalm for the sons of Korah. To the chief Musician upon Mahalath Leannoth, Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite.

O LORD God of my salvation, 88
I have cried day *and* night before thee:
Let my prayer come before thee: 2

1—8. The Psalmist appeals for a hearing, supporting his appeal by a pathetic description of the chastisements by which God has brought him to the very edge of the grave.

1. *O LORD God* &c.] **Jehovah, the God of my salvation.** Cp. xxvii. 9.

I have cried day and *night before thee*] Parallels such as xxii. 2 suggest that this is the meaning intended, but it is difficult to extract it from the Heb. text, even if we assume that "the broken language corresponds to the weakness of the gasping sufferer" (Kay). An ingenious and plausible emendation removes the difficulty thus:

Jehovah my God, I have cried for help in the day time,
And in the night hath my crying been before thee.

Cp. *v.* 13; xxx. 2; Job xix. 7; Ps. xlii. 8. Though God has forsaken him, he can still address Him as *my God* (xxii. 1). Like Job, he must appeal to God even when God seems wholly alienated from him.

2. *come before thee*] **Enter into thy presence** (R.V. from P.B.V.). Cp. xviii. 6; lxxix. 11.

Incline thine ear unto my cry;
3 For my soul is full of troubles:
And my life draweth nigh unto the grave.
4 I am counted with them that go down into the pit:
I am as a man *that hath* no strength:
5 Free among the dead,
Like the slain that lie in the grave,
Whom thou rememberest no more:
And they are cut off from thy hand.
6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit,

my prayer...my cry] Cp. xvii. 1; lxi. 1. The word for 'cry' denotes a shrill piercing cry, frequently of joy, but sometimes, as here, of supplication, "expressive of emotional excitement such as an Eastern scruples not to use in prayer" (Cheyne).

3. *For* &c.] He pleads the urgency of his need as the ground for a hearing.

draweth nigh &c.] Hath drawn nigh unto Sheol, the gloomy nether world which is the abode of the departed. Cp. vi. 5; cvii. 18.

4. He is regarded as a dying man. *The pit* is the grave or Sheol. Cp. xxviii. 1; cxliii. 7; xxii. 29; Prov. i. 12.

that hath *no strength*] Like the feeble shadows of the dead. Or as R.V., that hath no help: cp. the cognate word in xxii. 19, rendered in R.V., *O thou my succour*.

5. *Free among the dead*] There can hardly be any allusion to Job iii. 19, where the word is used of a welcome release from servitude, for it is a far-fetched interpretation to suppose that a new turn is given to the phrase and that it here means 'dismissed against his will from the service of God.' Render as R.V., cast off, or R.V. marg., cast away. A cognate word is used for 'the house of *separation*' in which Uzziah lived as a leper (2 Chron. xxvi. 21).

Another but doubtful translation is, *My couch is among the dead:* cp. Job xvii. 13.

the slain &c.] The slain in battle, whose corpses are flung into a nameless common grave. Cp. Ezek. xxxii. 24 ff.

whom thou rememberest no more] Sheol is the 'land of oblivion,' where men neither remember God (vi. 5; xxx. 9) nor are remembered by Him. *They are cut off from thy hand*, severed from Thy gracious help and protection. Cp. xxxi. 22; Lam. iii. 54; 2 Chron. xxvi. 21. On this gloomy view of the future state see *Introd.* pp. xciii ff.

6. *Thou hast laid me*] God is treating him as though he were actually dead. The same word is used in the same connexion in xlix. 14.

in the lowest pit] The nether world in the depths of the earth. Cp. lxxxvi. 13; lxiii. 9; Lam. iii. 55. The Targum explains it allegorically of the Exile. "Thou hast placed me in exile which is like the nether pit." *in darkness*] R.V. in dark places. So Sheol is described in cxliii. 3; Lam. iii. 6. Cp. Job x. 21, 22.

In darkness, in the deeps.
Thy wrath lieth hard upon me,
And thou hast afflicted *me with* all thy waves. Selah. 7
Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; 8
Thou hast made me an abomination unto them:
I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.
Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: 9
LORD, I have called daily upon thee,
I have stretched out my hands unto thee.

in the deeps] A word generally used of the depths of the sea: here metaphorically of the depths of misery (lxix. 15; cp. Lam. iii. 54), or as another synonym for Sheol, which was supposed to be situated below the sea. Cp. lxxi. 20; Job xxvi. 5.

The LXX and Syr. however read 'shadow of death' or 'deep gloom' (xliv. 19, note). This reading only implies a transposition of the consonants in the Heb. text, and is supported by the parallel passage in Job x. 21, 22, which seems to be in the Psalmist's mind.

7. *Thy wrath* &c.] Cp. xxxii. 4; xxxviii. 2.

thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves] Cp. xlii. 7 for the metaphor.

8. Like Job he is deserted even by his familiar friends (not merely *acquaintance*, as A.V.), and this is due to the act of God, Who has smitten him with a sickness which makes them loathe even the sight of him. Cp. xxxi. 11; Job xix. 13 ff., 19. He seems to describe himself as a leper like Job. Leprosy was a living death (Num. xii. 12): more than any other disease it was regarded as the direct 'stroke' of God (Job xix. 21). The leper was cut off from all society and even from taking part in the public worship of God, and was compelled to live alone (Lev. xiii. 46; 2 Chr. xxvi. 21). The reference is of course not to the temporary seclusion for the purpose of ascertaining whether a man was really a leper (Lev. xiii. 4 ff.), but to the permanent separation from society, in which the leper was virtually a prisoner, not daring to expose himself to the public gaze (Job xxxi. 34).

Possibly however the last line of the verse is not literal but metaphorical, describing the hopelessness of his condition as a prisoner who cannot escape. Cp. Job iii. 23; xiii. 27; xix. 8; Lam. iii. 7.

St Luke seems to allude to this verse in his narrative of the Crucifixion, ch. xxiii. 49.

9—12. Again (cp. *v.* 1) he pleads the constancy of his prayers. His strength is failing. He will soon be dead; and in the grave he will be beyond the reach of God's love and faithfulness. Cp. Job x. 20 ff.; xvii. 11 ff.

9. *Mine eye mourneth*] R.V. wasteth away. The sunken, lack-lustre eye is the sure sign of suffering. Cp. vi. 7; xxxi. 9; Job xvii. 7.

stretched out] R.V. spread forth, in the attitude of prayer. Cp. (though the word is different) xliv. 20; cxliii. 6; Is. i. 15.

10 Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?
Shall the dead arise *and* praise thee? Selah.
11 Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave?
Or thy faithfulness in destruction?
12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?
And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?
13 But unto thee have I cried, O LORD;
And in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.

10. This and the two following verses can hardly be, as some commentators suppose, the prayer to which he refers in *v.* 9. The connexion of thought seems to be this. He has prayed that God will shew him His marvellous lovingkindness, but he will soon be beyond the reach of it, for of course from his point of view there can be but one answer to the questions of *vv.* 10—12, and that a negative one. In despair he asks;

Wilt thou do wonders for the dead?
Shall the shades arise and praise thee?

To do 'wonders' is the prerogative of God (Ex. xv. 11; Ps. lxxvii. 11, 14): to give thanks to Him for them is the duty of man: but the Psalmist cannot believe that even God will work such a miracle that the dead shall arise and praise Him. *Rephaim*, the Heb. word for 'shades,' denotes the dead as weak and nerveless ghosts. *Arise* might mean no more than 'stand up,' referring to what takes place in the unseen world, but the parallel of Is. xxvi. 14 suggests that it is a resurrection of which the poet speaks as inconceivable. Cp. Job xiv. 12.

11. To proclaim God's lovingkindness and faithfulness is the delight of His people (xl. 10; xcii. 2), but in the grave they will neither have cause nor power to do it. These two attributes, so often coupled together, are the keynote of Ps. lxxxix.

'Destruction,' Heb. *Abaddon*, is almost a proper name for Sheol as the place of ruin: elsewhere only in the 'Wisdom literature,' Job xxvi. 6; xxviii. 22; xxxi. 12; Prov. xv. 11; xxvii. 20. Cp. Rev. ix. 11, where it is the name of "the angel of the abyss," Gk. *Apollyon*, 'the Destroyer.'

12. Nay, God's wonders will not even be known in Darkness, nor His righteousness, His faithfulness to His covenant (lxxi. 2, and often), in the land of Oblivion: where men neither remember God (vi. 5) nor are remembered by Him (*v.* 5); where thought feeling and action are at an end. See Eccl. ix. 5, 6, 10; and even in Ecclesiasticus xvii. 27, 28, Baruch ii. 17, we hear the echo of Is. xxxviii. 18 f.

13—18. Death brings no hope. Will not God then listen to his prayer and grant him some relief in his extremity of suffering and solitude?

13. But as for me, unto thee, Jehovah, have I cried for help,
And in the morning shall my prayer come before thee.

He contrasts himself with the dead, whose covenant relation with

LORD, why castest thou off my soul? 14
Why hidest thou thy face from me?
I *am* afflicted and ready to die from *my* youth *up*: 15
While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.
Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; 16
Thy terrors have cut me off.
They came round about me daily like water; 17
They compassed me about together.
Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, 18
And mine acquaintance *into* darkness.

God is at an end. He at least can still pray, and in spite of all discouragement will not cease to pray.

Prevent = 'go to meet,' as in lix. 10; lxxix. 8. The first thought of each day shall be prayer. Cp. v. 3; lv. 17.

14. Questions of surprise and expostulation. Cp. lxxiv. 1; lxxvii. 7. For the second line cp. Job xiii. 24; Ps. xiii. 1. God "shuts out his prayer," Lam. iii. 8.

15. Will God have no pity upon one whose whole life has been spent at the point of death? Could this be said of Israel as a nation? 'From youth' is of course frequently used of the nation (cxxix. 1, 2; Jer. xxxii. 30; &c.), but Israel's existence had not been continuously wretched and precarious.

while *I suffer* &c.] **I have borne thy terrors (till) I am distracted.** *Terrors* is a favourite word with Job. The word rendered *distracted* occurs here only and is of doubtful meaning. Possibly it is a false reading for another word meaning *faint* or *stupefied* (xxxviii. 8).

16. **The fiery streams of thy wrath have gone over me.**

Cp. xlii. 7; but for *waves* he substitutes *fiery wraths*.

Thine alarms, a word found only in Job vi. 4, **have made an end of me** (Lam. iii. 53).

17. **They have surrounded me like water all the day long;**
They have encompassed me about together.

The figure of *v.* 16 is continued. The flood of calamity threatens to engulf him, and there is none (*v.* 18) to stretch out a helping hand to the drowning man.

18. Cp. *v.* 8; xxxviii. 11; Job xix. 13.

and *mine acquaintance* into *darkness*] A difficult phrase. Another possible rendering is, **my familiar friends are darkness**: darkness takes the place of friends: cp. Job xvii. 14.

We take leave of this sad singer with his riddle unsolved, with no ray of light piercing the gloom; yet believing in the fact of God's love though he can only see the signs of His wrath, appealing, like Job, to God, though God seems utterly hostile to him; assured that if he has any hope at all, it is in God alone. His faith has met its reward.

PSALM LXXXIX.

This Psalm presents, with singular force and pathos, the dilemma which must have perplexed many a pious soul in the Exile. On the one hand, the assured lovingkindness and faithfulness of God and His explicit promise of an eternal dominion to the house of David; on the other hand, the sight of the representative of that house a discrowned exile, and his kingdom plundered and desolate. How could the contradiction be reconciled?

The Psalm consists of an introduction, followed by three main divisions. Its argument may be traced as follows.

i. The Psalmist's purpose is to celebrate the lovingkindness and faithfulness of Jehovah, which he is persuaded are eternal and unlimited. They have been manifested in the covenant with David, and the solemn proclamation of that covenant is given as from the mouth of God Himself (1—4).

ii. After this introduction, marked off as such by a musical interlude, the Psalmist proceeds to celebrate the praise of Jehovah, dwelling especially upon the power and faithfulness which are the double guarantee for the performance of His promises. Heaven and the angels praise Him, for they know that there is none like Him (5—7); He manifests His sovereignty in nature and in history as the Creator and Ruler of the world, and His moral attributes of righteousness and judgement, lovingkindness and truth, are the climax of His glory (8—14). Happy the people who have such a God, and whose king is the special object of His choice and care (15—18).

iii. The mention of the king forms the transition to the next division, which is a poetical expansion of the promise to David recorded in 2 Sam. vii. On that memorable occasion Jehovah had solemnly covenanted to strengthen and support the king of His choice, to give him victory over all his enemies, to extend his dominion to the boundaries foretold of old, to adopt him as His firstborn and make him supreme over the kings of the earth, to give eternal dominion to his seed after him. Though the sins of his descendants might demand punishment, the divine covenant that his seed and his throne should endure for ever, would be sacred and inviolable (19—37).

iv. Having thus confronted God with His own promises, the Psalmist proceeds to confront Him with the actual state of things which is in glaring contradiction to those promises. He has abandoned king and people to defeat, disgrace, ruin (38—45). Remonstrance is followed by earnest pleading. Life is short. If relief come not soon, the Psalmist cannot live to see the proof of God's faithfulness, and meanwhile he and all God's servants are forced to endure the contemptuous insults of their heathen conquerors (46—51).

Thus the motive of the Psalm is the contradiction between God's character and promises on the one hand, and the fate of the king and people of Israel on the other hand. The keywords of the Psalm are *loving-*

kindness and *faithfulness*, each of which occurs seven times (*vv.* 1, 2, 5, 8, 14, 24, 28, 33, 49). Cp. also *faithful* (28, 37), *I will not be false* (33), *I will not lie* (35), *covenant* (3, 28, 34, 39), *oath* (3, 35, 49). Love moved Jehovah to enter into the covenant with the house of David: faithfulness binds Him to keep it. The enthusiastic praises of Jehovah's majesty (*vv.* 5 ff.), and the detailed recital of the splendour and solemnity of the promise (*vv.* 19 ff.), serve to heighten the contrast of the king's present degradation, while at the same time they are a plea and a consolation. Can such a God, is the Psalmist's argument, fail to make good so solemn a promise? How the contradiction is to be solved is left entirely to God. Hope does not yet take the shape of prayer for the advent of the Messianic king.

The Psalm was probably written during the Exile. It can hardly be earlier than the destruction of Jerusalem and the downfall of the Davidic kingdom, and on the other hand there is nothing to indicate that it is later than the Return from Babylon. *Vv.* 38 ff. receive their most natural interpretation if it was written while Jehoiachin was still a dishonoured captive in Babylon, i.e. before B.C. 561. For they seem to speak of an individual who is the representative of David and bears the title of Jehovah's anointed, and yet is actually dethroned and dishonoured; and the feeling of bitter disappointment which they breathe was more natural when the fall of the kingdom was comparatively recent, than it would have been after the Return, when at least the dawn of hope had begun, and a step had been taken towards the solution of the problem which perplexed the Psalmist. *V.* 14*a* is borrowed in *v.* 2 of the Restoration hymn, Ps. xcvii.

The theory that the Psalm was written after the conquest of Judah by Shishak in the reign of Rehoboam (1 Kings xiv. 25 ff.; 2 Chron. xii. 2 ff.) is wholly improbable. The language of *vv.* 38 ff. must refer to something more than a temporary disaster, however serious: moreover use is certainly made of Ps. lxxx. 12 in *vv.* 40, 41, and possibly of Pss. lxxiv, lxxix in *vv.* 41, 46, 50, 51, Psalms which cannot well be earlier than the Fall of Jerusalem.

The exilic date is supported by the parallels in Jer. xxxiii. 21, 22, 26, and Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24; xxxvii. 24, 25, the only passages in prophecy where the phrase 'David my servant' is used (except Is. xxxvii. 35=2 Kings xix. 34). Cp. too Ezek. xxxiv. 29; xxxvi. 6, 15 with *vv.* 50, 51; the conjunction of 'lovingkindness' and 'faithfulness' in Lam. iii. 22, 23; and the lament over the capture of 'Jehovah's anointed' in Lam. iv. 20.

The choice of this Psalm as a Proper Psalm for Christmas Day is doubtless due to its containing the recital of the great Messianic promise to David. But the whole Psalm, and not merely that part of it, is appropriate, for the Incarnation was the true solution of the Psalmist's perplexity, as the supreme demonstration of the lovingkindness and faithfulness of God in the fulfilment of His promises. Cp. Luke i. 32 f.

Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

89 I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever:
With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.
2 For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever:
Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.
3 I have made a covenant with my chosen,
I have sworn unto David my servant,
4 Thy seed will I stablish for ever,
And build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.

On *Ethan the Ezrahite* see Intr. to Ps. lxxxviii.

1—4. The Psalmist states his theme: the lovingkindness and faithfulness of Jehovah, which he is persuaded can never fail; and the promise of eternal dominion to the house of David.

1. God's lovingkindnesses and faithfulness are an unfailing theme for grateful song. The past lovingkindnesses of God are unalterable facts; His faithfulness to His promises is beyond question: thus in these opening verses the poet's faith rises triumphantly over the circumstances in which he is situated.

the mercies] Better, the lovingkindnesses, and so throughout the Psalm. 'Lovingkindness' and 'faithfulness' are its key-words, each occurring seven times. Cp. Is. lv. 3, "the sure" (or "faithful") "lovingkindnesses shewn to David."

with my mouth] Aloud and openly.

2. *For I have said*] 'I have deliberately come to this conclusion.' Thus emphatically the poet introduces the motive for his song. He is persuaded that one stone after another will continue to be laid in the building of God's lovingkindness till it reaches to heaven itself, even though it may now seem to be a deserted ruin. Though for rhythmical reasons the verse is divided into two lines, its sense must be taken as a whole: 'Lovingkindness and faithfulness shall be built up and established for ever in the heavens.'

For the metaphorical use of 'build' cp. Job xxii. 23; Jer. xii. 16; Mal. iii. 15. The choice of the word, as well as of 'establish' in the next line, is suggested by their use in *v.* 4.

in the very heavens] High as the heavens (xxxvi. 5); or in the region where it is beyond the reach of earthly vicissitudes (cxix. 89, 90).

Many editors would read, *Thou hast said...My faithfulness shall be established* &c., a change partly supported by the LXX and Jer. But the structure of the Psalm is against the change, for the verses run in pairs, and *v.* 2 is clearly to be connected with *v.* 1: moreover the emphatic 'I have said' is by no means superfluous.

3, 4. These verses contain the sum of the promise to David and his seed (2 Sam. vii. 5 ff.) which is expanded in *vv.* 19 ff. It is in relation to this promise in particular that the poet intends to sing of God's lovingkindness and faithfulness. Almost every word is taken from the narra-

And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD: 5
Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.
For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? 6
Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD?
God *is* greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, 7

tive of 2 Sam. vii. For 'David my servant' see *vv.* 5, 8, 26, and cp. *vv.* 19, 20, 21, 25, 27, 28, 29: for 'establish' see *vv.* 12, 13, 16, 26: for 'for ever' see *vv.* 13, 16, 24, 26, 29: for 'seed' and 'throne' see *vv.* 12, 13, 16: for 'build' see *v.* 27. 'Chosen' represents *v.* 8 (cp. Ps. lxxviii. 70 f.). 'Covenant' however does not belong to the phraseology of 2 Sam. vii (but see 2 Sam. xxiii. 5); nor is the promise spoken of there as confirmed by an oath.

The introduction of God as the speaker without any prefatory 'Thou hast said' is surprisingly abrupt. It is possible that the word has dropped out. But Hebrew leaves much to be understood, and misunderstanding is here impossible.

5—18. The adoring recital of God's attributes which follows here has a twofold purpose in relation to the subject of the Psalm. It is a plea with God, and it is an encouragement to Israel. His omnipotence guarantees His ability, His faithfulness is the pledge of His will, to perform His promises to David.

5—7. Jehovah's incomparableness is ever being celebrated in heaven. The angelic beings, "who best can tell," as standing nearest to the throne of God, and partaking most of His nature, know that there is none like Him. (Cp. Milton, *Par. Lost*, Book V. 160, ff.).

5. *The heavens*, in contrast to the earth, include the whole celestial order of being. Cp. xix. 1; l. 6.

thy wonders] The word in the Heb. is in the singular. It denotes not the *wondrousness* of God in the abstract, but His wonderful course of action regarded as a whole, of which His 'wonderful works' are the several parts. The word conveys the idea of what is mysterious, supernatural, divine. (See on lxxi. 17.) It is especially appropriate here, since the choice of David was a factor in the great plan which was to be consummated in the mystery of the Incarnation. Cp. Is. ix. 6.

thy faithfulness &c.] **Yea, thy faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones.** It is not the congregation of Israel, but 'the company of heaven' that is meant, as in Job v. 1 and xv. 15, where we have the same parallel between 'heavens' and 'holy ones.' Holy themselves, as supernatural beings (though only relatively holy, Job xv. 15), they best know the absolute holiness of God and can praise Him most worthily (Is. vi. 3), as they watch the revelation of His wisdom in the unfolding of His purposes of grace (Eph. iii. 10).

6, 7. For who in the sky can be compared unto Jehovah?
Who is like Jehovah among the sons of God,
A God greatly to be dreaded in the council of the holy ones,

And to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.
8 O LORD God of hosts,
Who *is* a strong LORD like unto thee?
Or *to* thy faithfulness round about thee?
9 Thou rulest the raging of the sea:
When the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.
10 Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain;

And to be feared above all that are round about him?

God's nature is unique, incomparable. Even among celestial beings there is none that can be compared with Him.

The phrase *bnē ēlīm*, found elsewhere only in xxix. 1, denotes angels. It might be rendered *sons of the mighty*, describing them as mighty celestial beings; or *sons of the gods*, beings "belonging to the class of superhuman, heavenly powers" (Cheyne); but it is best taken as a doubly-formed plural, and rendered as in R.V. marg., *sons of God* (El); synonymous with *bnē Elōhīm* in Job i. 6; ii. 1; xxxviii. 7.

With *v.* 7 cp. Is. viii. 13. The angels form the council of the great King (Job xv. 8, R.V. marg.; Jer. xxiii. 18, 22), but He towers above them all in unapproachable majesty.

8—14. Jehovah's incomparableness is manifested in nature and in history.

8. *God of hosts*] A significant title in this connexion. See 1 Kings xxii. 19; and note on xlvi. 7.

Who is a mighty one like thee, O Jah?
And thy faithfulness is round about thee.

Name and question both recall the great hymn of redemption, Ex. xv. 2, 11. Cp. lxviii. 4; 2 Sam. vii. 22. Strength and faithfulness are the attributes upon which the Psalmist dwells, as the pledge for the fulfilment of the promise. Faithfulness surrounds Him like an atmosphere of light, as in a different aspect "clouds and darkness are round about him" (xcvii. 2).

9, 10. In this and the following verses THOU, THINE are the emphatic words.

the raging] Or, **proud swelling**. Cp. xlvi. 3. The sea represents the most turbulent and formidable of the powers of nature. Cp. xciii. 3 f.; Job xxxviii. 11. From the sea of nature the poet turns to the sea of nations of which it is the emblem (lxv. 7). At the Red Sea God proved His sovereignty over both. For *Rahab* as a name of Egypt see note on lxxxvii. 4. *Broken in pieces* denotes crushing defeat (xliv. 19): *as one that is slain* expresses the result; the ferocious monster lies pierced through and harmless. A comparison of Job xxvi. 12, 13 (on which see Dr Davidson's notes) suggests that the language is chosen so as to allude not only to the destruction of the Egyptians at the Red Sea, but to the primitive mythological idea of a conflict between God and the powers of nature personified as 'Rahab.'

Thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.
The heavens *are* thine, the earth also *is* thine:
As for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.
The north and the south thou hast created them:
Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.
Thou hast a mighty arm:
Strong is thy hand, *and* high is thy right hand.
Justice and judgment *are* the habitation of thy throne:
Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

with thy strong arm] Better, **With the arm of thy strength didst thou scatter thine enemies.** Cp. Is. li. 9, 10.

11. **THINE are the heavens, THINE also the earth:**
The world and the fulness thereof, THOU hast founded them.

Cp. xxiv. 1, 2; l. 12; lxxviii. 69; Job xxxviii. 4; Prov. iii. 19.

12. *The north and the south*] The furthest extremities of the world. Cp. Job xxvi. 7.

Tabor and Hermon] These mountains are named, not so much to represent the West and East of the land, as because they are the grandest and most conspicuous natural features of Palestine. Tabor is described as a "strange and beautiful mountain," towering "over the monotonous undulations of the surrounding hills," and "so thickly studded with trees, as to rise from the plain like a mass of verdure." In Jer. xlvi. 18 it is used as an emblem of pre-eminence. Hermon was "the image of unearthly grandeur, which nothing else but perpetual snow can give; especially as seen in the summer, when 'the firmament around it seems to be on fire.'" Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 350, 404.

shall rejoice in thy name] Better as R.V., **rejoice.** Nature is a revelation of its Creator, and rejoices in the fulfilment of its office. Cp. xix. 1; lxv. 12, 13.

13. **THINE is an arm with might.** 'Arm,' 'hand,' 'right hand' (terms frequently used in connexion with the Exodus, e.g. Ex. xv. 6, 9, 12, 16) denote not merely power but the exertion of power; and the use of verbs in the second line, lit. *Thy hand sheweth strength, thy right hand exalteth itself*, emphasises the thought, that God not only possesses but exercises His power.

14. **Righteousness and judgement are the foundation of thy throne:**
Lovingkindness and truth attend thy presence.

The first line recurs in xcvii. 2. Cp. too xxxiii. 5. *Righteousness*, or the principle of justice, and *judgement*, or the application of it in act, are the basis of all true government, divine as well as human (Prov. xvi. 12; xxv. 5). *Lovingkindness* and *truth* are represented as angels attending in God's Presence (xcv. 2), ready to do His bidding (ciii. 3), rather than as couriers preceding Him.

15 Blessed *is* the people that know the joyful sound:
They shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.
16 In thy name shall they rejoice all the day:
And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.
17 For thou *art* the glory of their strength:
And in thy favour our horn shall be exalted.
18 For the LORD *is* our defence;
And the Holy One of Israel *is* our king.

15—18. Happy the people that have such a God, and whose King is the vicegerent of such a Sovereign. These verses form the transition to the second division of the Psalm, *vv.* 19 ff. From the praise of God it is natural to pass on to the felicity of His people, and from the mention of the people to the king who is their head and His representative.

15. Happy the people that know the shout of joy,
That walk, Jehovah, in the light of thy countenance.

Terū'āh may mean the jubilant shouting with which religious festivities were celebrated (xxvii. 6; xxxiii. 3; lxxxi. 1; xcv. 1, 2; 2 Sam. vi. 15); or the acclamation with which a king was greeted (xlvii. 1, 5; Num. xxiii. 21); or the blowing of trumpets upon certain solemn occasions (Lev. xxiii. 24; Num. xxix. 1). Happy indeed is Israel when it can thus greet its God (cxliv. 15), enjoying the sunshine of His favour (iv. 6).

16. *shall they rejoice...shall they be exalted*] Render with R.V. **do they rejoice ..are they exalted.** Jehovah's revelation of Himself is at once the source and the subject of their joy: His unswerving adherence to His covenant is the secret of their prosperity.

17. Jehovah alone is the strength of which they boast. Cp. xliv. 6 ff.

in thy favour] Cp. xliv. 3; xxx. 7.

our horn shall be exalted] So the *Qrē*, with the LXX and Syr. The *Kĕthībh*, with which agree Targ. and Jer., has *wilt thou exalt our horn*. Cp. lxxv. 5, 10. By the change of person, the poet claims his share in this glorious inheritance. "*Thy* gives place to *we* unconsciously, as his heart swells with the joy that he paints." (Maclaren.)

18. For to Jehovah belongeth our shield;
And our King to the Holy One of Israel.

Shield, as in xlvii. 9, is a metaphor for the king as the protector of his people. The king of Israel belongs to Jehovah, because he is appointed by Him to be His representative, as his title *Jehovah's anointed* testifies; he derives his authority from Him, and therefore can claim His protection. For *Holy One of Israel* see note on lxxi. 22.

The A.V. is grammatically unjustifiable; and the R.V. marg. rendering of the second line, *Even to the Holy One of Israel our King*, though grammatically possible, and supported by some Ancient Versions, is less suitable to the context.

19—37. The mention of the king in *v.* 18 naturally leads up to the covenant with David which was briefly alluded to in *vv.* 3, 4. The

Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, 19
And saidst, I have laid help upon *one that is* mighty;
I have exalted *one* chosen out of the people.
I have found David my servant; 20
With my holy oil have I anointed him:
With whom my hand shall be established: 21
Mine arm also shall strengthen him.
The enemy shall not exact upon him; 22
Nor the son of wickedness afflict him.
And I will beat down his foes before his face, 23
And plague them that hate him.
But my faithfulness and my mercy *shall be* with him: 24

Psalmist now recites the promise in detail in a poetical expansion of the narrative in 2 Sam. vii.

19. *Then*] On the well-known occasion already referred to in *vv.* 3, 4. *in vision*] See 2 Sam. vii. 17.

to thy holy one] Nathan, or more probably David, as the principal recipient of the message. So some MSS. But the traditional text, supported apparently by all the Ancient Versions, reads the plural, *to thy saints*, or rather to thy beloved; i.e. the people of Israel, for whom the promise made through David to Nathan was intended. The word rendered *thy beloved* denotes Israel as the object of that *lovingkindness* which the Psalmist is celebrating. See l. 5, and Appendix, Note I.

I have laid help] Endowed him with the power and assigned to him the office of helping My people in their need. For *laid* = 'conferred,' of the Divine endowment of the king, see xxi. 5; and for *help* as a Divine gift to the king, see xx. 2. The phrase is unusual, but the conjectures *a diadem* (cp. *v.* 39) or *strength* are unnecessary.

one that is *mighty*] Cp. 2 Sam. xvii. 10. The word is chosen with reference to the Divine 'might' of which he was the representative, *v.* 13: cp. xx. 6; xxi. 13.

one *chosen*] Cp. *v.* 3; lxxviii. 70; 1 Kings viii. 16.

20. *I have found*] Sought out and provided. Cp. 1 Sam. xiii. 14; xvi. 1; Acts xiii. 22. *David my servant*] See on lxxviii. 70, and cp. 2 Sam. iii. 18; vii. 5, 8. *have I anointed him*] 1 Sam. xvi. 1, 12 f.

21. *With whom* &c.] My helping hand shall continually be with him: a stronger equivalent for "the LORD was with him," 1 Sam. xviii. 12, 14; 2 Sam. v. 10.

22. *shall not exact upon him*] Shall not oppress him as a creditor oppresses a debtor. But the sense is doubtful, and the word probably means *surprise him, fall upon him unawares*, as in lv. 15.

nor the son of wickedness afflict him] The phrase is taken from 2 Sam. vii. 10, where however it is applied to the people.

23. But I will beat down his adversaries before him,
And smite them that hate him.

24. And my faithfulness and lovingkindness shall be with him.

And in my name shall his horn be exalted.
25 I will set his hand also in the sea,
And his right hand in the rivers.
26 He shall cry unto me, Thou *art* my Father,
My God, and the rock of my salvation.
27 Also I will make him *my* firstborn,
Higher than the kings of the earth.
28 My mercy will I keep for him for evermore,
And my covenant *shall* stand fast with him.
29 His seed also will I make *to endure* for ever,
And his throne as the days of heaven.
30 If his children forsake my law,
And walk not in my judgments;

25. *in the sea...in the rivers*] R.V., **on the sea...on the rivers**: i.e. I will extend his dominion to the Mediterranean on the west, and to the Euphrates on the north-east, the boundaries of the land according to ancient promise. See Gen. xv. 18; Ex. xxiii. 31; Deut. xi. 24; 1 Kings iv. 24; cp. Ps. lxxii. 8; lxxx. 11. The plural *rivers* is a poetical generalisation, or may denote the Euphrates and its canals.

26. The promise made to David on behalf of Solomon is here extended to David himself. For *my God, and the rock of my salvation* cp. xviii. 2; Deut. xxxii. 15.

27. **I also** corresponds to the emphatic *He* at the beginning of *v.* 26. It is God's answer to David's cry of filial love. The titles *son* and *firstborn* applied to Israel (Ex. iv. 22; Jer. xxxi. 9) are conferred upon the king who is Israel's representative: and the promise made to Israel (Deut. xxvi. 19, cp. xxviii. 1) is here transferred to David,

I also will appoint him as firstborn,
Most high above the kings of the earth.

David's posterity is included in his person: and the high promise, never fully realised in any of his successors, points forward to Him Whom St John styles in language borrowed from this verse and *v.* 37, "the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth."

28, 29. The emphasis is on *for evermore*. The permanence of the promise is expressed in the strongest terms. Cp. 2 Sam. vii. 13, 16.

Once more too the notes of lovingkindness and faithfulness are sounded, for the word rendered *shall stand fast* is from the same root as the word for faithfulness; hence R.V. marg. *shall be faithful*.

as the days of heaven] I.e. for ever; the heaven is the emblem of permanence as well as stability. Again a phrase originally referring to the nation (Deut. xi. 21) is applied to the king.

30—34. The sins of David's descendants will bring chastisement to them, but they will not annul the promise to David. Man's unfaithful-

If they break my statutes, 31
And keep not my commandments;
Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, 32
And their iniquity with stripes.
Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from 33
him,
Nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.
My covenant will I not break, 34
Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.
Once have I sworn by my holiness 35
That I will not lie unto David.
His seed shall endure for ever, 36
And his throne as the sun before me.
It shall be established for ever as the moon, 37
And *as* a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.

ness cannot make void the faithfulness of God, though it may modify the course of its working.

31. *If they break*] Lit. **profane.**

32. *The rod...stripes*] From 2 Sam. vii. 14, where the fuller phrases *the rod of men...the stripes of the children of men* seem to mean correction such as even human parents know they must administer. The paternal relation involves the duty of chastisement (Prov. xxiii. 13 f.; Heb. xii. 9 f.).

33. But my lovingkindness will I not break off from him,
Neither be false to my faithfulness.

The word rendered *break off* is an unusual one to apply to lovingkindness, and its form is anomalous. The change of one letter however gives the word used in 1 Chr. xvii. 13, **I will not take away**, and this emendation should probably be adopted. *Be false to* is the word found in 1 Sam. xv. 29, "The Strength of Israel *will not lie.*"

34. *break*] Lit. profane, as in *v.* 31. God's covenant, like His laws, is a sacred thing. Men may violate His laws, but He will not violate His covenant.

the thing that is gone out of my lips] The word once spoken is irrevocable. The phrase is used of vows in Num. xxx. 12; Deut. xxiii. 23.

35—37. The irreversible nature of a promise confirmed by God's oath.

35. *Once*] Once for all (LXX ἅπαξ, Vulg. *semel*): or, *one thing.*

have I sworn] Cp. *v.* 3. *by my holiness*] See note on lx. 6.

that I will not lie] R.V. omits *that*, and makes this clause parallel to, not dependent on, the preceding line.

36. Cp. *vv.* 4, 29; lxxii. 5, 7, 17.

37. Construction and meaning are doubtful. (1) The original passage in 2 Sam. vii. 16 is in favour of making *his throne* the subject to *shall be established*, and against the marginal alternatives of R.V., *As the*

38 But thou hast cast off and abhorred,
Thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.
39 Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant:
Thou hast profaned his crown *by casting it* to the ground.

moon which is established for ever, and as *the faithful witness in the sky:* or, *and is a faithful witness in the sky.*

(2) The A.V., with which substantially agrees the R.V., **And (as) the faithful witness in the sky**, raises the question what is meant by 'the faithful witness in the sky.' Is it the sun, or the moon, or the rainbow? Or is it the fixed laws of nature which are appealed to in Jer. xxxi. 35, 36, xxxiii. 20 f., 25 f., as a symbol of the permanence of God's covenant with Israel and with David? This last explanation is the best, but it seems somewhat far-fetched; and the omission of the particle of comparison *as* points (3) to another rendering: **And the witness in the sky is faithful.** The witness is God Himself, Who thus confirms His promise with a final attestation. Cp. Jer. xlii. 5, "Jehovah be a true and *faithful witness* against us": Job xvi. 19, "my witness is in heaven."

38—45. But present realities are in appalling contrast to this glorious promise: the king is rejected and dethroned, his kingdom is overrun by invaders, his enemies are triumphant.

38. And THOU, thou hast cast off and rejected,
Hast been enraged with thine anointed.

The Psalmist has drawn out God's promise in the fullest detail, and now he confronts God with it:—THOU Who art omnipotent, faithful, and just; THOU Who hast made this promise, and confirmed it with the most solemn oath; THOU hast broken it! Some punishment might have been expected (*vv.* 30 ff.), but not this total abandonment (*vv.* 33 ff.). David's heir has the same fate as Saul (1 Sam. xv. 23, 26), in spite of the express promise that it should not be so (2 Sam. vii. 15).

The audacity of the expostulation scandalised many ancient Jewish commentators, and the famous Aben-Ezra of Toledo (d. 1167) relates that there was a certain wise and pious man in Spain, who would neither read nor listen to this Psalm. But the boldness is that of faith, not of irreverence: it finds a parallel in xliv. 9 ff., and in Habakkuk's questionings (i. 2 ff., 13 ff.).

39. Thou hast abhorred the covenant of thy servant:
Thou hast cast his desecrated crown to the ground.

Thine anointed, thy servant (cp. *v.* 20) include both David and the successor who represents him. The titles plead the claim which the king had on God's protection.

The word *nēzer* means (1) consecration, and (2) the crown or diadem of the high priest (Ex. xxix. 6) or the king (2 Sam. i. 10), as the mark of consecration to their office. For the phrase *profaned to the ground* cp. lxxiv. 7.

40. Insensibly the king is identified with the nation whose head and representative he was. The first line is taken from the description of Israel as a vine in lxxx. 12.

Thou hast broken down all his hedges;
Thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin.
All that pass by the way spoil him:
He is a reproach to his neighbours.
Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries;
Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.
Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword,
And hast not made him to stand in the battle.
Thou hast made his glory to cease,
And cast his throne down to the ground.
The days of his youth hast thou shortened:
Thou hast covered him with shame. Selah.

How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself, for ever?
Shall thy wrath burn like fire?
Remember how short my time is:

hedges] Or, as R.V. in lxxx. 12, fences.

41. The first line from lxxx. 12, with the substitution of *spoil* for *pluck*: the second from lxxix. 4; cp. xliv. 13. The 'neighbours' are surrounding nations, once tributary to Israel.

42. *Thou hast set up*] R.V. thou hast exalted. Contrast *vv.* 19, 24.

to rejoice] The malignant delight of enemies is constantly deprecated as an aggravation of the bitterness of misfortune. Cp. xxv. 2; xxx. 1; xxxv. 19, 24 ff.; xxxviii. 16; and the close parallel in Lam. ii. 17.

43. Yea, thou turnest back the edge of his sword (R.V.): i.e. not as A.V. might seem to mean, bluntest it, but as the parallelism shews, makest it give way in battle. Cp. 2 Sam. i. 22.

44. *his glory*] R.V. his brightness: the lustre of his kingdom.

45. He is prematurely old. Cp. cii. 23. The words might be figuratively applied to the nation (Hos. vii. 9), or to the kingdom, prematurely brought to an end: but it is more natural to regard them as referring to the king himself. Jehoiachin was but 18 (2 Kings xxiv. 8), or according to 2 Chron. xxxvi. 9, only 8 years old, when he came to the throne, and he reigned only three months and ten days. The prime of his life was spent in exile, apparently in actual confinement in which he was literally 'clothed with dishonour' (2 Kings xxv. 29).

46—51. The Psalmist appeals to God to withdraw His wrath and remove this contradiction, pleading the shortness of life and the taunts of God's enemies as grounds for a speedy answer.

46. How long, Jehovah, wilt thou hide thyself for ever?
(How long) shall thy wrath burn like fire?

A repetition of lxxix. 5, with slight variations.

47. Literally, if the text is right, *O remember what a fleeting life I am!* but it is possible that the letters of the word *chĕlĕd* have been

Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?
48 What man *is he that* liveth, and shall not see death?
Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.

49 Lord, where *are* thy former lovingkindnesses,
Which thou swarest unto David in thy truth?
50 Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants;
How I do bear in my bosom *the reproach of* all the mighty people;

accidentally transposed and that we should read *chādēl*, as in xxxix. 4: *how frail*, or, *transitory, I am*. As in that Psalm (cp. *v.* 13) and in Job vii. 6 ff, xiv. 1 ff, the shortness and uncertainty of life are pleaded as a ground for the speedy restoration of God's favour. The Psalmist desires to see the solution of the riddle with his own eyes, and doubtless he gives utterance to the feelings of many pious souls in the Exile, whose faith was tried by the thought that they would not live to see the fulfilment of the prophecies of restoration.

wherefore &c.] **For what vanity hast thou created all the sons of men!** Must life end thus in unsatisfied longing? Cp. xxxix. 5, 11.

48. What man is he that shall live on, and not see death,
That shall deliver his soul from the hand of Sheol?

The word for *man* is *gĕbĕr*, 'strong man,' as distinguished from women, children, and non-combatants, as much as to say, What man is so strong that he shall live on and escape the iron grasp of Death?

"There is no armour against fate,
Death lays his icy hand on kings."

49. After an interlude of music the Psalmist resumes his prayer. He returns to the thoughts of God's lovingkindness and faithfulness, from which he started (*v.* 1). But His lovingkindnesses seem to belong to an age that is past and gone: have they vanished never to return? The faith which had to look for the manifestation of God's love in this world was often sorely tried. See Ps. lxxvii; Is. lxiii. For the question cp. Judg. vi. 13; and for the second line, Mic. vii. 20.

in thy truth] **In thy faithfulness.**

50. *the reproach of thy servants*] The taunts which they have to bear as the servants of a God Who, say their enemies, cannot or will not help them. Cp. lxxiv. 10, 18, 22; lxxix. 4, 10.

how I do bear &c.] The Massoretic text must be rendered, *How I do bear in my bosom all the many peoples*. It is grammatically anomalous and gives no satisfactory sense. A simple emendation, which has some support from Ancient Versions, reads thus:

How I bear in my bosom the dishonouring of the peoples.

Cp. the similar phrase with the same word for 'dishonouring' (A.V. *shame*) in Ezek. xxxiv. 29; xxxvi. 6, 15. As a faithful Israelite he must perforce bear the burden of his people's shame.

Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD; 51
Wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.

Blessed *be* the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen. 52

51. Cp. lxxix. 12, of which *v.* 50 is also a partial reminiscence.

the footsteps of thine anointed] They are like a rabble hooting and insulting him wherever he goes. Cp. xvii. 11; Jer. xii. 6 (R.V.). May not the phrase have been suggested by the recollection of actual insults offered to the discrowned Jehoiachin as he was led through the streets of Babylon in the conqueror's triumph? Insults offered to the king are insults at once to Jehovah and to the people whose representative he was.

The Targum interprets the words of the delay of Messiah's Advent. "For thine enemies reproach, O Lord, they reproach the slowness of the footsteps of Thine Anointed."

52. The doxology marks the close of Book iii. Cp. xli. 13; lxxii. 18, 19; cvi. 48. In P.B.V. it is joined, somewhat incongruously, to the preceding verse. But though it is no part of the original Psalm, it is entirely in harmony with the spirit of it, as an expression of the faith which can bless God even when the visible signs of His love are withdrawn. Cp. Job i. 21.

THE PSALMS.

BOOK IV.

PSALMS XC—CVI.

PSALM XC.

THIS Psalm consists of three divisions.

i. It is to Jehovah alone that Israel can appeal in their distress, though He seems to have forsaken them. He has proved Himself their refuge in each succeeding age: He alone is the Eternal God: the lives of men are at His sovereign disposal (1—6).

ii. The brief and uncertain span of life is being spent by the Psalmist and his contemporaries under the cloud of Jehovah's wrath for their sins. Few indeed lay the lesson to heart: O that He would teach them wisdom (7—12).

iii. O that He would relent and return to His people, and once more manifesting Himself in His saving Majesty, bless them with renewed prosperity (13—17).

The first two divisions of the Psalm lead up to the prayer for the restoration of God's favour to Israel, which is its main purpose. The brevity of human life—appearing still more brief in comparison with Divine Eternity—is pleaded, as in lxxxix. 46 ff., as a ground for the speedier exhibition of mercy. Must generation after generation pass away without seeing the proofs of God's love? But with all its plaintive tone of sadness, the Psalm betrays no trace of murmuring or impatience. It breathes a spirit of perfect submission to the Will of God. The faith which appeals unwaveringly to the God Who is chastening Israel for their sins; the resignation which accepts the transitoriness of human life as God's decree, while it ventures tactly to accentuate its sadness by contrasting it with His Eternity; the deep humility of the confession that it is for its sins that Israel is suffering; the earnestness of the prayer for the dawn of a brighter day in the renewal of God's favour; all combine to stamp the Psalm as the utterance of a poet-seer who had learnt profound lessons of spiritual truth through the discipline of suffering.

Can that poet-seer have been Moses, as the title seems to affirm? The Psalm is worthy of him, and at first sight its contemplation of the transitoriness of human life, its acknowledgement of suffering as the punishment of sin, and its prayer for the restoration of God's favour, seem appropriate enough to a time towards the close of the Wandering in the wilderness, and a natural utterance for the leader who had watched one generation of Israelites after another dying out for their faithless murmuring. But a closer consideration of the Psalm makes it difficult if not impossible to suppose that it was actually written by Moses. No weight is to be attached to the argument that the average length of life spoken of in *v.* 10 is not that of the Mosaic age, for the longer lives of Moses and other leaders may have been exceptional; and the absence of distinct reference to the circumstances of the Israelites in the prayer of *vv.* 13—17 might be accounted for by the general character of poetical language. But the author appears to look back upon a long period of national existence (*v.* 1); and it is difficult to imagine that the leader of a great nation, at the outset of its national existence, when it was on the

point of taking possession of the inheritance promised to it, could possibly have expressed himself in the language of *vv.* 13–17. Its subdued tone is not that of one who is looking forward to a future rich in vast possibilities.

It has been urged in defence of the Mosaic authorship of the Psalm that it presents many points of resemblance in thought and language to the Book of Deuteronomy. The argument would not be conclusive, even if the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy were undisputed, for the resemblances might be fully accounted for by the Psalmist's familiarity with that book. But if, as is now generally held, Deuteronomy in its present form is far later than the time of Moses, the Deuteronomic language of the Psalm points to a later date than the Mosaic age.

To what period then may it be assigned? Probably to the time of the Exile. Its position in the Psalter is in favour of this view. It breathes the feelings of that period as they are expressed in Ps. lxxxix. 46 ff., and it finds a striking parallel in Lam. v. 16—22.

How then came it to have the name of Moses prefixed to it? Possibly this was done by the compiler, who noticed the resemblance of the Psalm to Deuteronomy, and thought, as many have thought since, that it suited the situation of the Israelites in the wilderness. Possibly, as even Delitzsch admits is conceivable, it was written by some gifted poet to express what he conceived to be Moses' feelings. This he might have done in all good faith, without any intention of claiming the authority of Moses for his own composition: and in doing it, he may have, consciously or unconsciously, reflected the circumstances and expressed the feelings of his own times.

Happily the sublimity and pathos of this Psalm are wholly independent of the question of its date and authorship. Its use in the Burial Service gives it an additional solemnity of association; and it will not be forgotten that one of the finest hymns in the English language—Dr Watts's "O God, our help in ages past,"—is based upon it.

For the title *A Prayer* cp. the titles of xvii; lxxxvi; cii; cxlii; and the subscription to lxxii; and see *Introd.* p. xv. *Man of God* is a title of honour, applied to Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 1; Josh. xiv. 6), and to other prophets and messengers of God, to express the close relation of fellowship in which they stood to Him.

A Prayer of Moses the man of God.

90 Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.

1—6. The Psalmist's confession that God is Israel's refuge; that He alone is the Eternal; that He is the sovereign Disposer of human life.

1. *Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place*] The Psalmist addresses God not by the covenant Name Jehovah (LORD), but by the title which designates Him as the Ruler of the world. He not merely is, but has proved Himself to be, Israel's home, age after age, in all the vicissitudes of its history. The same word is used in xci. 9 (A.V. *habitation*), and

Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou *art* God.
Thou turnest man to destruction;
And sayest, Return, ye children of men.
For a thousand years in thy sight

(in a slightly different form) in Deut. xxxiii. 27, to which the Psalmist may be alluding. Some editors would change *mā'ōn*, 'dwelling-place,' into *ma'ōz*, 'stronghold.' In lxxi. 3 (see note) there has probably been a confusion between these words, but it is unnecessary to alter the text here.

in all generations] More forcibly the Heb., *in generation and generation*, i.e. in each successive generation. So Deut. xxxii. 7 (A.V. *many generations*).

2. *the mountains*] Named first because they were regarded as the most ancient parts of the earth. Cp. Deut. xxxiii. 15; Prov. viii. 25; Hab. iii. 6.

thou hadst formed] Lit. *didst travail in birth with*. The LXX and some other Ancient Versions, startled perhaps by the boldness of the metaphor, read the passive, and hence P.B.V., *were made*. For the metaphor of the birth of Creation cp. Job xxxviii. 8, 28, 29; Gen. ii. 4. The same words are used of Israel in Deut. xxxii. 18.

the world] The Heb. word *tēbēl* denotes the fruitful, habitable part of the earth. Cp. Prov. viii. 31.

from everlasting to everlasting &c.] From eternity to eternity: from the infinite past (as men speak) into the infinite future, *thou art* EL, the God of sovereign power. Cp. Is. xliv. 6; xlviii. 12. It is also possible to render, *Even from everlasting to everlasting art thou, O God* (cp. xciii. 2).

3. The thought here is not merely that man's life is infinitely brief in contrast to the eternity of God, but that it is absolutely at His disposal. The Psalmist plainly refers to Gen. iii. 19, though he chooses different words to emphasise his point: **Thou makest mortal man return to atoms.** *Ĕnōsh* denotes man in his frailty (ciii. 15): *dakkā*, lit. *pulverisation*, implies the dissolution of the body into its constituent elements.

and sayest, Return &c.] Two interpretations deserve consideration: (1) 'Return to the dust whence ye were taken,' cp. cxlvi. 4; Job x. 9; xxxiv. 15. (2) 'Return into being,' a call to new generations to appear on the stage of history (Is. xli. 4). Cp. P.B.V. "Again thou sayest, Come again, ye children of men." In favour of (2) it is urged that *and sayest* implies fresh action on the part of God: and that the antithesis of the rise of new generations as the old pass away is more forcible than the synonymous parallelism of (1): but (2) involves a somewhat strained interpretation of *Return*, and the evident allusion to Gen. iii. 19 is in favour of (1). The interpretations *Return to Me* (cp. Eccl. xii. 7), and *Return to life* in the resurrection, are untenable.

4. The precise connexion of the thought is obscure. Some com-

Are but as yesterday when it is past,
And *as* a watch in the night.
5 Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are *as*
a sleep:
In the morning *they are* like grass *which* groweth up.

mentators connect *v.* 4 with *v.* 2, treating *v.* 3 as a parenthesis. 'Thou art eternal, for lapse of time makes no difference to Thee.' But it seems preferable to connect *v.* 4 directly with *v.* 3. 'Thou sweepest away one generation after another, for the longest span of human life is but a day in Thy sight: though a man should outlive the years of Methuselah, it is as nothing in comparison with eternity.'

when it is past] Strictly, *when it is on the point of passing away.* A whole millennium to God, as He reviews it, is but as the past day when it draws towards its close,—a brief space with all its events still present and familiar to the mind. Cp. 2 Pet. iii. 8, where the converse truth is also affirmed; Ecclus. xviii. 10.

and as a watch in the night] A climax. Said I like the past day? Nay, time no more exists for God than it does for the unconscious sleeper. The Israelites divided the night into three watches (Lam. ii. 19; Jud. vii. 19; 1 Sam. xi. 11). The division into four watches mentioned in the N.T. was of Roman origin.

How could the profound truth that time has no existence to the Divine mind be more simply and intelligibly expressed? To God there is no before and after; no past and future; all is present. To Him 'was, and is, and will be, are but is.' It is only the weakness of the finite creature that 'shapes the shadow, Time.'

5. *Thou carriest them away as with a flood*] A single word in the Heb. suffices to draw the picture. Man is compared to a building swept away by a sudden burst of rain such as is common in the East. Cp. Is. xxviii. 2; xxx. 30; Matt. vii. 25, 27.

they are as a sleep] As those who are asleep. Or, they fall asleep, in the sleep of death. Cp. lxxvi. 6; Jer. li. 39, 57; Nah. iii. 18.

in the morning &c.] Another figure for the transitoriness of human life developed in *v.* 6. Cp. ciii. 15, 16; Job xiv. 2; Is. xl. 6 ff. Its significance depends on the peculiar character of some of the grasses in Palestine. "The grasses of the Jordan valley and the Dead Sea basin are very peculiar, seldom becoming turf-like, or compact in growth, shooting up in early spring with the greatest luxuriance, and then as rapidly seeding and dying down, scorched and burnt up at once, and leaving for the rest of the year no other trace of their existence than the straggling stems from which the seeds and their sheath have long been shaken." Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 453.

The P.B.V. follows the LXX, Vulg., and Jer. in its rendering, *and fade away suddenly like the grass.* The verb may mean to pass away as well as *to grow* or *shoot up*, but it must clearly have the same meaning in both verses, and *v.* 6 appears to be decisive for the latter meaning. Some commentators indeed render *passes away* in both

In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up;
In the evening it is cut down, and withereth.
For we are consumed by thine anger,
And by thy wrath are we troubled.
Thou hast set our iniquities before thee,
Our secret *sins* in the light of thy countenance.
For all our days are passed away in thy wrath:
We spend our years as a tale *that is told.*
The days of our years *are* threescore years and ten;
And if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years,
Yet *is* their strength labour and sorrow;
For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

verses, but the sense *in the morning it flourishes and passes away* is unsatisfactory. The double rendering *dried up and withered* in P.B.V. comes down through the Vulg. from the LXX.

6. *it is cut down*] Or, *it fadeth.* Cp. xxxvii. 2.

7—12. Human life is at best brief and uncertain; and Israel's life is being spent under the cloud of God's wrath for the punishment of its sins.

7. *For* &c.] This is the Psalmist's reason for reminding God of the frailty of human life. We—Israel—have been consumed through thine anger, and through thy wrath have we been dismayed. He speaks of it not as a general truth but as an actual experience. *Dismayed* is a word specially used of the consternation inspired by Divine judgements. Cp. vi. 2, 3; xlviii. 5; and the cognate subst. *terror*, Lev. xxvi. 16.

8. Instead of 'hiding His face' from their sins He sets them all before Him, and drags them all to light. Elsewhere 'the light of God's countenance' denotes His favour; here a slightly different word, lit. *the luminary of Thy face*, is used to denote His Presence as a searching light from which nothing can be hid. *Our secret* [*sin*] is rather the inward sin of the heart unseen by man but known to God (xliv. 21, a cognate word), than sin of which the sinner is himself unconscious (xix. 12), though this may be included.

9. *are passed away*] Lit. *turn* or *decline* towards evening (Jer. vi. 4). We are "a generation of thy wrath" (Jer. vii. 29). Our life is drawing to a close under a cloud; there is no sign of 'light at evening-tide.'

we spend &c.] Lit. we consume our years as a sigh: they are past as quickly as a sigh, itself the expression of sorrow and weariness. The meaning of the word is however uncertain. Some explain, *as a thought*, comparing Theognis, 979, "Swift as a thought gay youth is past and gone": the Targ. gives *as a breath*: A.V. follows Jerome, "consumpsimus annos nostros quasi sermonem loquens."

10. The punctuation of A.V. is misleading. Render:
The days of our years—therein are threescore years and ten,
And if we be of much strength, fourscore years:
And their pride is but travail and misery,
For it is swiftly past, and we have taken flight.

11 Who knoweth the power of thine anger?
Even according to thy fear, *so is* thy wrath.
12 So teach *us* to number our days,
That we may apply *our* hearts *unto* wisdom.
13 Return, O LORD, how long?
And let it repent thee concerning thy servants.
14 O satisfy us early *with* thy mercy;
That we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
15 Make us glad according to the days *wherein* thou hast afflicted us,

Our lifetime (Gen. xlvii. 8, 9) is but short at best; and all its ostentation, all upon which man prides himself, does but bring trouble and has no real value (Job v. 6). Is the Psalmist thinking of the contrast between the triumphant utterance of Num. xxiii. 21, "Misery hath not been beheld in Jacob, nor travail been seen in Israel," and present experience? For *taken flight* cp. Job xx. 8.

11. Who knoweth the power of thine anger,
And thy wrath according to the fear that is due unto thee? (R.V.)

Who understands or lays to heart the intensity of God's wrath against sin so as to fear Him duly with that reverence which is man's safeguard against offending Him? Cp. v. 7; Prov. iii. 7; viii. 13; xvi. 6; Ex. xx. 20; Deut. v. 29.

12. *So teach* us] *So* then, as Thy fear (*v.* 11) which is "the beginning of wisdom" requires, *make* us *know* how &c.: give us that discernment which we lack.

that we may apply &c.] **That we may get us an heart of wisdom** (R.V.). The verb is used of garnering in the harvest. The second line combines the thoughts of Deut. v. 29 and xxxii. 29.

13—17. Prayer for such a restoration of God's favour to His people as will gladden the members of it through the brief span of life. Perhaps the connexion with the preceding verses is the hope that Israel's resipiscence may prepare the way for Jehovah's return.

13. A combined reminiscence of Ex. xxxii. 12 and Deut. xxxii. 36. Cp. too Ps. vi. 3, 4. *Return* is the most obvious rendering; but the passage in Ex. suggests that the meaning may be, *Turn* from thy wrath; *how long* wilt thou be angry? Cp. lxxx. 4. God's change of attitude is spoken of in Scripture after the manner of men as repenting or relenting; not of course that He can *regret* His course of action, or be subject to mutability of purpose.

14. O satisfy us in the morning with thy lovingkindness] Israel is still in the night of trouble. O may the dawn soon come! Cp. xxx. 5; xlix. 14; cxliii. 8.

that we may rejoice] **Or, shout for joy**, as **v. 11**, and often.

15. *Make us glad according to the days* &c.] Let the joy of restoration to Thy favour be proportioned to the depth of our humiliation.

And the years *wherein* we have seen evil.
Let thy work appear unto thy servants, 16
And thy glory unto their children.
And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: 17
And establish thou the work of our hands upon us;
Yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

Cp. Is. lxi. 7. The form of the word for 'days' (*y'mōth*) occurs elsewhere only in Deut. xxxii. 7; and the word for *afflicted* is the same as that rendered *to humble thee* in Deut. viii. 2, 3, 16.

16. *Let thy work appear*] Manifest Thy power on their behalf. God's *work* denotes especially the exertion of His saving Providence. Cp. xcii. 4; Deut. xxxii. 4; Hab. iii. 2.

thy glory] *Thy majesty*, manifested in their deliverance. Cp. cxi. 3; Is. xl. 5. The division of the clauses is of course purely rhythmical. The sense of the whole verse is, Let Thy working and Thy majesty appear unto Thy servants and abide upon their children.

17. *the beauty*] Or, *pleasantness*: the gracious kindliness of Jehovah. Cp. xxvii. 4; Prov. iii. 17.

the work of our hands] A phrase characteristic of Deuteronomy, where it occurs seven times. All the ordinary undertakings of daily life are meant, not necessarily any particular enterprise.

The Psalmist's prayer is for the restoration of Israel. In the renewed life of the nation (Lam. v. 21) the servants of God will recover the gladness of their individual lives, now quenched and dead. The time had not yet come when the hope of personal immortality could be appealed to as the consolation of sorrow and the consecration of effort (1 Cor. xv. 58).

PSALM XCI.

This exquisite Psalm may no doubt simply describe the security of the godly man under Jehovah's protection amid the perils of his journey through life. But it gains in point and force if it is regarded as addressed to Israel[1] in a crisis of its history. Pss. xc, xci, xcii are connected by several links of thought and language. Cp. xc. 1, xci. 9, 'dwelling-place'; xc. 6, xcii. 7, 'flourish'; xc. 15, 16, xcii. 4, 'make glad,' 'thy work'; xci. 1, 9, xcii. 1, 'Most High'; xci. 8, xcii. 11, the judgement of the wicked. It is natural to consider them as a group. If now Ps. xc is the plea of Israel in exile, and Ps. xcii its thanksgiving for deliverance, may not Ps. xci be the voice of faith assuring Israel that it will be safe in the midst of the calamities which are about to fall upon Babylon? As Israel was untouched by the judgements upon the Egyptians which were the prelude to its deliverance, so it will be now before the exodus from Babylon. Jehovah's Presence will defend His

[1] For the address to Israel in the singular cp. Ex. xxiii. 20 ff.; Deut. xxxii. 6; and many other passages. See *Introd.* pp. li f.

people in a day of distress. The promises of Exod. xxiii. 20 ff. and Jeremiah's prophecies of Israel's deliverance from Babylon seem to have been in the Psalmist's mind. With *v.* 11 cp. Ex. xxiii. 20; with *v.* 16 cp. Ex. xxiii. 26; *vv.* 3, 5—7 are an expansion of Ex. xxiii. 25 *b*; with *v.* 15 cp. Jer. xxx. 7, "a time of distress for Jacob"; xxx. 11, "I am with thee to save thee"; xxx. 19, "I will glorify them"; with xc. 15, xcii. 4 cp. Jer. xxxi. 13, "I will make them glad."

The use of the first person in *vv.* 1, 9 *a*, followed by the second person in *vv.* 3 ff., 9 *b* ff., is somewhat perplexing. Many commentators suppose that the text is corrupt and emend it in various ways (see notes on *vv.* 1, 9). But the two occurrences of the first person mutually support one another. If the interpretation suggested above is adopted, *vv.* 1, 2 and 9 *a* will be the profession of the Psalmist's faith, on the strength of which he addresses to Israel the comforting words of *vv.* 3 ff., 9 *b* ff. If the reference of the Psalm is not national but individual these verses will be addressed, in accordance with the usual practice of the didactic style, to any godly Israelite. Cp. e.g. Ps. xxxvii. Another possible explanation is that the Psalmist, after addressing God in words of confident faith, addresses himself, and reminds himself in detail of all that is meant by that Divine guardianship. For a parallel comp. Ps. cxxi. It has also been suggested that the Psalm was intended to be sung antiphonally; one voice or choir chanting *vv.* 1, 2, and another answering in *vv.* 3—8; the first striking in again with *v.* 9 *a*, and the second again responding in *vv.* 9 *b*—13, while a third recited the Divine speech in *vv.* 14—16[1].

The Psalm falls into two equal divisions. (i) The Psalmist's profession of trust in Jehovah, the Most High, the Almighty, gives the theme of the Psalm (1, 2), which is developed in detail (3—8): (ii) the repetition of this profession in the briefest form (9 *a*) introduces a further development of it (9 *b*—13), and the Psalm closes with a Divine assurance answering to the Psalmist's opening profession, and authoritatively confirming his confidence (14—16).

This Psalm expands the thought of xc. 1, and furnishes a corrective to the somewhat desponding tone of that Psalm.

Like Ps. xc it shews familiarity with the language of Deut. xxxii. Cp. *v.* 2 with Deut. xxxii. 37; *vv.* 4, 12 with Deut. xxxii. 11; *v.* 6 with Deut. xxxii. 24; *v.* 8 with Deut. xxxii. 35, 41; *v.* 13 with Deut. xxxii. 33. Compare also Ps. cxxi; Job v. 19—26; Prov. iii. 23—26.

91 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High

1, 2. The theme of the Psalm; Jehovah a secure defence for those who take refuge in Him.

1. Whoever takes refuge with God will find himself under the protection of an Almighty guardian. "He shall be treated as *God's guest*

[1] The Targum recognises the idea of a plurality of speakers, explaining the Ps. as a dialogue between David and Solomon. *vv.* 2, 3, "David said, 'I will say to Jehovah,' &c. 'For He shall deliver thee, Solomon my son.' &c." *v.* 9, "Solomon answered and said thus, 'For thou Jehovah art my refuge, in a lofty dwelling hast Thou placed the abode of Thy Majesty' (*Shechinah*)." *v.* 10, "The Lord of the world answered and said thus, 'There shall no evil befall thee,' &c."

Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say of the LORD, *He is* my refuge and my fortress:
My God; in him will I trust.
Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,

...His Almighty Power shall be spread around him during the night of trouble and peril. Loving faith on man's part shall be met by faithful love on God's part" (Kay). Such is the sense of the A.V., which is certainly the most natural rendering of the verse. It is however rejected by most modern commentators as tautological. The predicate, it is said, simply repeats the subject, for the verb *shall abide*, or *lodge*, does not bear the emphatic meaning of permanent sojourn. But the verb is not used of temporary sojourn only (cp. xxv. 13), and if the emphasis is on the words *in the shelter of the Almighty*, the second line is not merely a repetition of the first.

Other renderings which have been suggested are (1) *As one that dwelleth in the covert of the Most High, that lodgeth in the shadow of the Almighty, I will say*, &c. Cp. R.V. marg. This construction however is harsh and cumbrous. (2) With the insertion of a word at the beginning of *v.* 1, *Happy is the man that dwelleth...that lodgeth ...that saith...*; an emendation plausible enough in itself, but without any support from the Ancient Versions. (3) With a slight change of text, *He that dwelleth... that lodgeth...saith of Jehovah*. This emendation has much to commend it. It is supported by the LXX (cp. 9), and it gets rid of the supposed tautology, as well as of the somewhat perplexing first person *I will say* in *v.* 2.

But it is unnecessary if *v.* 1 is explained as above; the gain to the sense is doubtful; and the elimination of the first person destroys a feature of the Psalm. Its use here is supported by its recurrence in *v.* 9.

secret place] Covert or hiding-place. Cp. xxvii. 5; xxxi. 20; xxxii. 7, &c.

the shadow] Shelter or protection. The figure is probably (cp. *v.* 4) derived from the care of the mother-bird for her young (xvii. 8, &c.), rather than from the hospitable roof (Gen. xix. 8), or sheltering rock (Is. xxxii. 2).

the Most High...the Almighty] Significant titles, chosen to emphasise the power of the Sovereign Ruler of the world to defend His people.

2. I will say unto Jehovah, My refuge and my fortress;
My God in whom I will trust.

I can and will address Him thus in the language of faith. Cp. xviii. 2; xxxi. 3; lxxi. 3.

3—8. The providential care of God described in detail. The Psalmist, if the interpretation advocated above is correct, now addresses Israel; or, it may be, any godly Israelite.

3. *Surely he* &c.] For HE &c. The pronoun is emphatic.

the snare of the fowler] All insidious attempts against life or welfare (cxxiv. 7; cxli. 9, &c.; 2 Tim. ii. 26).

And from the noisome pestilence.
4 He shall cover thee with his feathers,
And under his wings shalt thou trust:
His truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler.
5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night:
Nor for the arrow *that* flieth by day;
6 *Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness;
Nor for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday.
7 A thousand shall fall at thy side,
And ten thousand at thy right hand;
But it shall not come nigh thee.
8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold
And see the reward of the wicked.
9 Because thou hast made the LORD, *which is* my refuge,

and *from the noisome pestilence*] from [omit *and*] the destroying pestilence. But *pestilence* comes later in *v.* 6, and the LXX, Symm., and Syr., give a better parallel to *the snare of the fowler* by the reading, which involves only a change of vocalisation, from the destroying word of malignant calumny and slander. Cp. the same parallel in xxxviii. 12, and the numerous complaints of slander, and prayers to be delivered from it; e.g. v. 9; cxx. 2, 3.

4. He shall shelter thee with his pinions,
And under his wings shalt thou take refuge:
His truth is a shield and buckler.

Cp. v. 11, 12; xvii. 8; lxiii. 7; and the figure in Deut. xxxii. 11, though the application there is different. God's truth, i.e. His faithfulness to His promises, will be a defence against hostile calumnies. The words rendered *shield* and *buckler* both denote large shields, protecting the whole of the person.

5. Neither sudden assaults of enemies by night, nor open attacks by day (Cant. iii. 8; Jer. vi. 4, 5; Prov. iii. 24, 25) shall have power to harm thee. The language is figurative: all hostility, whether secret or avowed, is meant.

6. Plague and Pestilence are personified as destroying angels. Cp. Is. xxxvii. 36.

7, 8. **Though a thousand fall...it shall not come nigh thee**] The emphasis is on **thee**. Thou shalt be as safe as Israel when the firstborn of the Egyptians were smitten (Ex. xii. 23): unharmed thyself thou shalt be a spectator of the punishment of the wicked, as Israel was at the Red Sea (Ex. xiv. 30, 31). That punishment is the indispensable counterpart of the deliverance of the righteous, *vv.* 14—16. Cp. xcii. 11, and notes there.

9—16. Renewed assurances of Divine protection, ratified by a Divine promise.

9. For thou, Jehovah, art my refuge!

Even the most High, thy habitation;
There shall no evil befall thee, 10
Neither shall *any* plague come nigh thy dwelling.
For he shall give his angels charge over thee, 11
To keep thee in all thy ways.
They shall bear thee up in *their* hands, 12
Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.
Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: 13
The young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will 14
I deliver him:

Thou hast made the Most High thy habitation.

So we must render. The A.V. is an attempt to escape from the difficulties of the verse, but it involves an intolerably harsh construction. As the text stands, the Psalmist begins the second division of the Psalm by repeating the profession of *v.* 2, and then, as before, addresses Israel as a whole, or the godly Israelite. *v.* 9*b* is virtually a protasis;—*If* or *since thou hast made...there shall no evil befall thee.*

Here too some critics would cut the knot of the change of persons by emending, *Because thou hast said, Jehovah is my refuge*, and *hast made the Most High thy habitation*; or, *For as for thee, Jehovah is thy refuge.* But the change is unnecessary. The word for *habitation* is the same as that rendered *dwelling-place* in xc. 1. The rendering of the P.B.V., "thou hast set thine house of defence very high," is probably a misunderstanding of the Vulg. *altissimum posuisti refugium tuum*, which, as the LXX, *τὸν ὕψιστον θὸυ καταφυγήν σου*, shews, means, *Thou hast made the Most High thy refuge.* It is supported by the Targum (see note 1, p. 554), but in view of the use of 'Most High' in *v.* 1 and xcii. 1 can hardly be right.

10. *befall thee*] Lit., *be let befall thee.* Cp. Prov. xii. 21.

thy dwelling] Lit., *thy tent*, a survival of the language of nomad life.

11. Cp. Gen. xxiv. 7, 40; Ex. xxiii. 20 ("I send an angel before thee to keep thee in the way"); Ps. xxxiv. 7. This verse and the next were quoted by the Tempter (Matt. iv. 6; Luke iv. 10, 11). If the words are primarily addressed to Israel, there is a particular force in the citation. Israel was a type of Christ; had He not then the fullest right to claim for Himself the promises made to Israel?

12. Upon their hands shall they bear thee] Cp. the metaphor in Ex. xix. 4.

lest thou dash &c.] and stumble and fall. Cp. Prov. iii. 23.

13. Thou shalt triumphantly overcome all obstacles and dangers, whether of fierce and open violence, or of secret and insidious treachery. Cp. Luke x. 19; Rom. xvi. 20.

14—16. God Himself speaks, solemnly confirming the Psalmist's faith.

14. *he hath set his love upon me*] Love responds to love. The word

I will set him on high, because he hath known my name
15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him:
I *will be* with him in trouble;
I will deliver him, and honour him.
16 *With* long life will I satisfy him,
And shew him my salvation.

means *to cling to with love*, and is used of God's love for Israel in Deut. vii. 7; x. 15.

set him on high] In safety from his enemies. Cp. xx. 1.

known my name] Recognised My revealed character as the faithful guardian of My people. Cp. ix. 10; v. 11.

15, 16. Cp. l. 15, 23.

honour him] Or, *glorify him*. Cp. Jer. xxx. 19.

with *long life*] Lit., *with length of days* (Deut. xxx. 20; Prov. iii. 2, 16); in fulfilment of the ancient promises, Ex. xx. 12; xxiii. 26 ("the number of thy days I will fulfil"), and in contrast to the destruction of the wicked, *vv.* 7, 8.

satisfy] Cp. xc. 14

my salvation] Visible manifestations of God's Providence proving His care for His people, such as the author of Ps. xc desired to see, and especially the deliverance from Babylon. Cp. xcviii. 2, 3. Each such manifestation was a harbinger of the final Messianic glory which is the goal of O.T. hope. In the light of N.T. revelation the words of the verse gain a new and larger meaning (1 John v. 11; 1 Pet. i. 5 ff.).

PSALM XCII.

i. To sing Jehovah's praise is a duty and delight. The proofs of His righteous government of the world fill the Psalmist's heart with joy. Only unspiritual men fail to perceive that the prosperity of the wicked is but the prelude to their ruin, while Jehovah sits enthroned on high for ever (1—8).

ii. His enemies perish, while His people are brought to honour. They rejoice in the discomfiture of the wicked and the triumph of the righteous as the proof of His sovereign power and faithfulness (9—15).

Thus the first division of the Psalm leads up to the central thought of *v.* 8, the supreme sovereignty of Jehovah which makes for righteousness; and the second division further illustrates the exercise of that sovereignty in the judgement of the wicked and the advancement of the righteous. The problems which perplexed the authors of Pss. xxxvii and lxxiii will ultimately receive a triumphant solution, of which an earnest has been already experienced.

It is clear that the Psalm is not merely an expression of individual gratitude for personal mercies. The Psalmist speaks on behalf of the community of Israel, as a representative of the true members of it. Such jubilant thanksgiving must surely have been prompted by some

particular exhibition of Jehovah's sovereign power on behalf of His people; and it is most natural to connect the Psalm with the judgement of Babylon and the Restoration from the Exile.

Do we feel *v.* 11 to be a jarring note in the midst of otherwise noble thoughts? Its harshness is mitigated if the triumph is national, not personal. The Psalmist felt intensely that Israel's cause was the cause of Jehovah against idolatry, the cause of truth against falsehood, the cause of righteousness struggling for existence against dominant tyranny and violence. Who would not rejoice in the victory of the right? And the expression of that joy necessarily took a concrete form. The Israelite did not speak, as we do, of the defeat of evil and the triumph of good, but of the destruction of the wicked and the prosperity of the righteous. See notes on lviii. 10, 11; and *Introd.* pp. lxxxviii ff.

The title, **A Psalm, a Song for the Sabbath day**, refers to the use of the Psalm in the services of the second Temple. (See *Introd.* p. xxvii.) We learn from the Talmud that it was sung at the libation of wine which accompanied the sacrifice of the first lamb of the Sabbath burnt-offering (Num. xxviii. 9, 10). Possibly it was selected because *v.* 4 was supposed to refer to the works of creation. But whatever may have been the reason for the choice, it suggests a noble conception of the "day of the soul's rest" as a day of joyous thanksgiving and devout meditation on the works of God. The Targum paraphrases the title curiously, "a Psalm of praise and song which the first man uttered upon the day of the Sabbath."

A Psalm *or* Song for the sabbath day.

It is a good *thing* to give thanks unto the LORD, 92
And to sing *praises* unto thy name, O most High:
To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, 2
And thy faithfulness every night,

1—3. Introduction: the joy and seemliness of praise and thanksgiving.

1. It is a *good* thing] As a tribute due to God; as a salutary and delightful occupation for man.

to sing praises] To make melody or sing psalms; the word from which *mizmōr*, 'a psalm,' is derived.

unto thy name, O Most High] To Jehovah as He has revealed Himself in His character of Supreme Governor of the world. Cp. vii. 17; ix. 2; xviii. 49.

2. Morning and evening are natural times for prayer (v. 3; lxiii. 6; lv. 17, &c.); lovingkindness and faithfulness are the attributes which move God to make and keep His covenant with His people (lxxxix. 1, note). The division of the verse into two parallel clauses is rhythmical, not logical (cp. xc. 16), but there is an appropriateness in the connexion of lovingkindness with the morning (xxx. 5; lix. 16; xc. 14; Lam. iii. 23), and faithfulness with the night.

3 Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery;
Upon the harp with a solemn sound.

4 For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work:
I will triumph in the works of thy hands.
5 O LORD, how great are thy works!
And thy thoughts are very deep.
6 A brutish man knoweth not;
Neither doth a fool understand this.
7 When the wicked spring as the grass,

3. With decachord and with psaltery,
With meditative music on the harp.

In xxxiii. 2; cxliv. 9, *ten-stringed* is an epithet of *psaltery*, but here two instruments seem to be meant. *Higgaion* occurs in ix. 16 as a technical term, denoting apparently an instrumental interlude. The word denotes *musing* or *meditation* in xix. 14. See *Introd.* p. xxiv.

4—8. The special ground for praise in the manifestation of Jehovah's sovereignty.

4. *hast made me glad through thy work*] The prayer of xc. 15, 16 has been answered. God has wrought for Israel.

I will triumph] Or, as in xc. 14, I will shout for joy. Not only joy but the expression of it is meant.

the works of thy hands] Or, the doings of thy hands, a different word from that in the preceding line. The context makes it clear that God's *work* and *doings* do not here mean the works of creation (viii. 3, 6), but the dealings of His Providence (xxviii. 5; cxliii. 5; Is. v. 12). It is the victory of righteousness which has gladdened the Psalmist's heart.

5. How great are thy doings, Jehovah!
Exceeding deep are thy thoughts.

The grandeur and profundity of Jehovah's designs in the government of the world stir the Psalmist's admiration. Cp. xxxvi. 6; xl. 5; cxxxix. 17, 18; Is. lv. 8, 9; Rom. xi. 33, 34.

"Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign Will."

6. *A brutish man...a fool*] Men who are mere sensuous animals, stupid and unreceptive, incapable of discerning spiritual things. Cp. xlix. 10; lxxiii. 22; xciv. 8.

this] Namely, the truth expressed in *vv.* 7, 8, that the wicked flourish only to perish, while Jehovah is eternally supreme. There should be a colon only at the end of *v.* 6.

7, 8. The tenses in *v.* 7 (cp. *vv.* 10, 11) do not merely express a general truth, but point to some particular event.

When the wicked did flourish as the herbage,

And when all the workers of iniquity do flourish;
It is that they shall be destroyed for ever:
But thou, LORD, *art most* High for evermore. 8
For lo, thine enemies, O LORD,
For lo, thine enemies shall perish; 9
All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.
But my horn shalt thou exalt like *the horn of* an unicorn: 10
I shall be anointed with fresh oil.

And all the workers of iniquity did blossom,
It was that they might be destroyed for ever:
But thou art on high for evermore, Jehovah.

The simile suggests the rapid growth and equally rapid ruin of the wicked. See note on xc. 5. Their triumph is the preparation for their fall. Cp. xxxvii. 35 ff.; lxxiii. 18 ff.

The simple stately rhythm of *v.* 8—a single line—well expresses the contrast of the unchanging supremacy of Jehovah to the upstart pretentiousness of the wicked. They deify themselves, claiming all power in earth and heaven (lxxiii. 8, 9), only to vanish and leave Jehovah's sovereignty more openly manifested (lxxxiii. 17, 18).

There is an obvious reminiscence of this verse in 1 Macc. ix. 23, "And it came to pass after the death of Judas that the lawless flourished and all the workers of iniquity sprang up."

9—15. Further confirmation of the sovereignty of Jehovah: the wicked who are His foes perish, the righteous who are His friends flourish.

9. *For lo*] Pointing apparently to some recent actual example. 'Anadiplosis' or rhetorical repetition is a favourite figure in this group of Psalms. Cp. xc. 17; xciii. 1, 3; xciv. 1, 3, 23; xcvi. 13. The first two lines are a reminiscence of Judg. v. 31.

shall be scattered] Lit. *shall scatter themselves.* The seemingly solid phalanx of antagonism breaks up and disperses, disintegrated from within.

10. **But my horn hast thou exalted like (the horn of) a wild ox:**
I am anointed with fresh oil.

The poet speaks on behalf of Israel restored and glorified. The metaphor is derived from animals tossing their heads in the consciousness of vigour. God has restored to Israel a buoyant sense of life and power to repel its enemies. Cp. lxxxix. 17, 24. 'Unicorn' comes from the LXX through the Vulg.; but the now extinct wild ox (*Bos primigenius*) is doubtless the animal meant. Its strength and untameableness are described in Job xxxix. 9 ff. Cp. Num. xxiii. 22; Deut. xxxiii. 17. See Tristram's *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, pp. 146 ff.

The metaphor in the second line is taken from the use of oil on occasions of festivity (xxiii. 5; xlv. 7; Is. lxi. 3), or as a restorative of strength. The rendering *I am anointed* is however doubtful. Some

11 Mine eye also shall see *my desire* on mine enemies,
And mine ears shall hear *my desire* of the wicked that rise up against me.
12 The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree:
He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
13 Those that be planted in the house of the LORD
Shall flourish in the courts of our God.
14 They shall still bring forth fruit in old age:
They shall be fat and flourishing;
15 To shew that the LORD *is* upright:
He is my rock, and *there is* no unrighteousness in him.

critics would follow the LXX and Symm. in reading the word with different vowels, and rendering, (*and restored*) *my failing strength with fresh oil*. "Israel is imagined as an old man, whose strength is restored through the use of oil" (Cheyne).

11. And mine eye hath seen (its desire) upon them that laid wait for me:
Mine ear heard (its pleasure) of them that rose up against me to do evil.

Cp. liv. 7; lix. 10, &c. Do the words grate upon our ears as we repeat the Psalm? Their form indeed belongs to the O.T., yet even the Christian is bidden to rejoice at the judgement of the enemies of God's kingdom (Rev. xviii. 20).

12. The fruitfulness of the palm and the fragrance of the cedar, the stately growth and evergreen foliage of both trees, above all, their longevity in contrast to the ephemeral grass which is the emblem of the wicked, may be among the points of comparison intended. Cp. *v.* 14; i. 3; Hos. xiv. 5, 6; Is. lxv. 22.

13. Planted in the house of Jehovah
They shall flourish in the courts of our God.

It is possible that trees had grown in the Temple courts, as they grow at the present day in the Haram area, and that the prosperity and security of the righteous are compared to the luxuriant growth of the carefully tended trees in the sacred precincts. But the expression may be merely figurative. The land was 'Jehovah's house.' Replanted there, Israel will evermore flourish under the care and guardianship of Jehovah. Cp. lii. 8; Is. lxi. 3; Jer. xxxii. 41.

The addition in the P.B.V. 'in the courts *of the house* of our God' is from the Vulg.

14. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age, like the palm-tree. Doughty (*Arabia Deserta*, i. 286) speaks of palms 90 feet high and 200 years old, in the oasis of Teyma. **They shall be full of sap and green (R.V.), like the olive** (Judg. ix. 9).

15. *To shew* &c.] To witness by their prosperity to the faithfulness and justice of Jehovah. The verse is based on Deut. xxxii. 4.

PSALM XCIII.

This Psalm is the prelude to the remarkable group of 'theocratic Psalms' xcv—c, and should be studied in connexion with them. Jehovah had from the first been Israel's king (Ex. xv. 18; Deut. xxxiii. 5; 1 Sam. xii. 12), but when He abandoned His people to their enemies He seemed to have abdicated His throne. Now however He has reassumed His royal state, and once more proclaimed Himself King. The prophecy of Is. lii. 7 has been fulfilled. The poet takes up the watchword, *Thy God hath proclaimed Himself king*, and in the judgement of Babylon and the restoration of Israel he sees the proof of Jehovah's sovereignty not over Israel only but over all the world. The heaving waves of the sea of nations may lash themselves into wild fury against the rock of His throne, but it stands eternally unmoved.

This and the other 'theocratic' Psalms have sometimes been interpreted as prophetic pictures of the final advent of Jehovah, the "one far-off divine event, to which the whole creation moves." But it is far more natural to regard them as thanksgivings for some actual event by which Jehovah's sovereignty had been visibly declared. It can hardly be doubted that this event was the Return from Babylon, and that this group of Psalms belongs to the early days of the Restoration. It was in truth a great 'day of Jehovah'; and if in eager faith Prophets and Psalmists spoke of it as though the final revelation of His power had already come, they did but speak as the prophets of an earlier age who looked for the Messiah as the Deliverer from the troubles of their own day, or the Apostles who anticipated the Return of the Lord in their own lifetime. They foreshortened the perspective of the glorious vision that was presented to their view, and it was only as years rolled on that men learned that the purposes which are eternally present to the mind of God can only be realised on the stage of the world's history by slow degrees.

In the LXX is prefixed the title, *For the day before the sabbath, when the land* [or *earth*] *had been filled with inhabitants: a praise-song of David*. The latter part of this title is valueless: the first part is confirmed by the Talmudic tradition. Ps. xciii was in fact the Psalm for Friday in the service of the Second Temple (see *Introd.* p. xxvii), and the reason given in the Talmud is that on the sixth day God finished the work of creation, and began to reign over it. The title in the LXX, ὅτε κατῴκισται ἡ γῆ, may, as Delitzsch supposes, reflect this tradition, and mean *when the earth was filled with inhabitants*. But it may equally well mean *when the land was peopled*, i.e. after the return from the Exile. Cp. the Sept. title of Ps. xcvii; and for the use of κατοικίζειν see LXX of Jer. xvii. 25, κατοικισθήσεται ἡ πόλις αὕτη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

The LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; 93

1, 2. Jehovah's new proclamation of His eternal sovereignty.

1. **Jehovah hath proclaimed himself king; he hath robed himself with majesty;**

The LORD is clothed with strength, *wherewith* he hath girded himself:
The world also is stablished, *that* it cannot be moved.
2 Thy throne is established of old:
Thou *art* from everlasting.
3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
The floods have lifted up their voice;

Jehovah hath robed himself, hath girded himself with strength.

The verbs in the perfect tense express not merely a fact (*Jehovah reigneth*) but an act. For a time, while His city was in ruins and His people in exile, He seemed to have divested Himself of the insignia of royalty and abdicated His throne. The ancient promise of Ex. xv. 18 seemed to have failed. But now He has once more vindicated His sovereignty by the deliverance of His people and the judgement of their enemies. The prophet's prayer (Is. li. 9) is answered, his vision (Is. lii. 7) is fulfilled. Jehovah has proclaimed Himself King, put on His royal robes, girded Himself like a warrior for action (Ex. xv. 3; Ps. lxv. 6; Is. lix. 17) with that strength which is His inalienable attribute (Ex. xv. 13; Ps. xxix. 1; lxviii. 34). For *majesty* cp. the use of the cognate verb in Ex. xv. 1, 21 ("hath triumphed gloriously"); and Is. xii. 5 ("excellent things"); xxvi. 10.

"Jehovah has proclaimed Himself king" is the key-note of this group of Psalms of the Restoration (xcvi. 10; xcvii. 1; xcix. 1; cp. ciii. 19). Cp. also xlvii. 7, 8.

the world also is stablished &c.] Yea, **the world shall be stablished that it be not shaken**. This is the consequence of Jehovah's once more assuming His sovereignty. The moral order of the world which seemed tottering to its fall is reestablished. Cp. lxxxii. 5. Here and in xcvi. 10, where the words recur, some critics would follow the Ancient Versions in reading tiqqēn for tiqqōn; *Yea, he has adjusted*, or, *ordered, the world*. Cp. the use of the same word in lxxv. 3. This reading appears in the P.B.V., "He hath made the round world so sure," which follows the Vulg., *etenim fundavit orbem terrae*. But the advantage of the change is doubtful. See note on *v.* 2.

2. Though Jehovah has thus proclaimed His kingdom afresh, it is no novel thing. His sovereignty and His Being are eternal: they know neither beginning nor end (xc. 2; xcii. 8). The contrast between Jehovah's ever firmly established throne and the tottering order of the world which needs His intervention to reestablish it is in favour of the Massoretic text of *v.* 1.

3, 4. The powers of earth menace Jehovah's sovereignty in vain.

3. *The floods*] Lit. *the rivers*, rising up and threatening to inundate the land and sweep everything before them, are emblems of the great world-powers threatening to overspread the world. Thus Assyria is compared by Isaiah to the Euphrates, 'the River' *par excellence*

The floods lift up their waves.
The LORD on high *is* mightier
Than the noise of many waters,
Yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.
Thy testimonies are very sure:
Holiness becometh thine house,
O LORD, for ever.

(Is. viii. 7, 8); Egypt by Jeremiah to the Nile (Jer. xlvi. 7, 8). Similarly the sea with its mighty breakers thundering against the shore as though it would engulf the solid land is an emblem of the heathen world menacing the kingdom of God, but all in vain. For the sea as an emblem of hostile powers cp. xlvi. 3; lxxxix. 9; Is. xvii. 12, 13.

their waves] A word occurring here only, probably meaning collision, clash, **din**.

4. The A.V. obliterates the structure of the verse. If the received text is retained we may render,

Above the thundering of many waters,
The mighty (waters), the breakers of the sea,
Jehovah on high is mighty.

But the grammatical construction is anomalous, and an easy emendation gives the sense,

Above the thundering of many waters,
Majestic above the breakers of the sea,
Majestic on high is Jehovah.

The repetition is in harmony with the style of the Psalm. The word for *noise*, lit. *voices*, may best be rendered *thundering*, for the plural is only used of thunder. *'Addîr* is inadequately rendered by *mighty*. It suggests the idea of grandeur and magnificence as well as power. Cp. Ex. xv. 6, 11 (a cognate word); Ps. viii. 1 (A.V. *excellent*); Is. xxxiii. 21.

5. *Thy testimonies*] Many commentators explain *testimonies* to mean the promises and threatenings which have now been proved true, comparing the use of the cognate verb in l. 7; lxxxi. 8; Deut. viii. 19; &c. But this sense of the word is unsupported, and it is best to take it in its usual sense of the 'law,' regarded as bearing witness to Jehovah's will and man's duty. Cp. xix. 7; cxi. 7. The transition seems somewhat abrupt; yet it is not inappropriate that the Psalm should close with a reference to the revelation which was the distinctive mark of Jehovah's kingdom (Deut. iv. 7, 8).

holiness &c.] God's house may be either the Temple or the land. The Psalmist is confident that now the ideal will be realised. Jehovah has returned to dwell there, and it shall no more be defiled by Israel itself (Jer. vii. 30), no more be desecrated by heathen invaders (Joel iii. 17; Is. lii. 1).

for ever] R.V. **for evermore**; lit. *for length of days* (xci. 16).

PSALM XCIV.

This Psalm is a prayer for the revelation of the righteousness of God, and an expression of confidence in the ultimate triumph of right. It falls into two main divisions.

i. The Psalmist appeals to Jehovah to manifest Himself as judge of the earth (1, 2). How long will He tolerate the arrogance of the tyrants who oppress His people, and contemptuously declare that He is ignorant or indifferent (3—7)?

Addressing some of his own countrymen who are inclined to doubt Jehovah's moral government of the world he rebukes them for their folly, and argues that Jehovah must of necessity see and hear and in due time punish (8—11).

ii. The second part of the Psalm is occupied with thoughts of consolation for times of trouble. Happy the man who is taught by God to endure patiently until right once more triumphs (12—15).

To whom can Israel look but to Jehovah, Whose love has been proved in time past (16—19)?

He cannot be the ally of injustice, but will defend His people, and exterminate their enemies (20—23).

Who were the oppressors of whom the Psalmist complains? From the contrast in *vv.* 5, 8, 10, 12 it would seem that they were foreigners, who openly despised Israel's God as indifferent to the sufferings of His people (*v.* 7). It is true that much of the language of the Ps. resembles that used elsewhere to describe the oppression of poor Israelites by their powerful countrymen. But it is the community as such (*v.* 5) and not one portion of it, which is oppressed, and a Psalmist who borrows so freely from his predecessors might easily use their language though the circumstances were somewhat different. Dependent though this Psalmist is in almost every line upon earlier literature, his argument with the doubters of God's moral government is urged with a force and originality of his own, and his clear assertion of the Divine education of the nations is almost without parallel in the O.T.

There is little or nothing to fix the date of the Ps. Some points of style and language seem to connect it with the two preceding Psalms. The figure of 'anadiplosis' or rhetorical repetition is common to all three (xcii. 9; xciii. 1, 3; xciv. 1, 3, 23); the same language is applied to the doubters of God's Providence (xcii. 6; xciv. 8); the same terms are used to designate Israel's oppressors (xcii. 7, 11; xciv. 16); xciv. 11 may be a contrast to xcii. 5. Possibly it may belong to the closing years of the Exile, and refer to harsh treatment which the Israelites had to suffer in Babylon. If so, the cry for vengeance is an echo of the language of Is. xl—lxvi and Jer. l, li. But it may belong to some later time in the post-exilic period, when the struggling community was oppressed by foreign governors.

In the LXX the Psalm bears the title *A Psalm of David, for the fourth day of the week*, and according to Talmudic tradition it was the special Psalm for that day in the services of the Second Temple. Cheyne

suggests that its position here, where it certainly intervenes strangely between two jubilant Psalms, arose "out of an attempt (not carried very far) to promote liturgical convenience," though it must obviously be "later than Ps. xciii, from which it differs so much in tone and import" (*Origin of the Psalter*, p. 72). Style however seems to point to a closer connexion of these Psalms than that of liturgical usage merely.

O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; 94 1
O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.
Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: 2
Render a reward to the proud.

LORD, how long shall the wicked, 3
How long shall the wicked triumph?
How long shall they utter *and* speak hard *things?* 4
And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?
They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, 5

1, 2. An appeal to Jehovah to manifest Himself as Judge of the world and Avenger of wrong.

1. God of vengeance, Jehovah,
God of vengeance, shine forth!

The Psalmist appeals to Jehovah, Who has the power and the right to punish (Deut. xxxii. 35; Nah. i. 2; Rom. xii. 19), to manifest Himself in all the splendour of His Presence (Deut. xxxiii. 2; Ps. l. 2; lxxx. 1). *God* is EL, 'the mighty God'; and the word for *vengeance* is plural, denoting the completeness of the retribution which He can inflict. Cp. "God of recompences," Jer. li. 56. For the 'anadiplosis' cp. *vv.* 3, 23, and xcii. 9, note.

2. *Lift up thyself*] Shew Thyself to be the supremely exalted Ruler. Cp. Is. vi. 1; xxxiii. 10; Ps. vii. 6.

judge of the earth] Cp. Gen. xviii. 25; Ps. lviii. 11; lxxxii. 8. The universal Judge is needed to call the subordinate 'judges of the earth' to account.

render a reward to the proud] R.V. **Render to the proud (their) desert**; assimilating the rendering to that of xxviii. 4. Cp. Lam. iii. 64.

3—7. How long will Jehovah tolerate the tyrannies of these proud blasphemers?

4. The verses run in pairs, and it seems preferable, with A.V., to regard *v.* 4 as a continuation of the question in *v.* 3, rather than, with R.V., to render it as an affirmative sentence. *Workers of iniquity* is the subject to the whole verse.

(How long) shall all workers of iniquity
Belch out, talk arrogantly, act haughtily?

Cp. lix. 2, 7; xxxi. 18. The exact sense of the last verb is doubtful. It may mean 'exalt themselves,' or 'speak proudly one with another.'

5. *They break in pieces*] Or, crush (as Is. iii. 15; Prov. xxii. 22),

And afflict thine heritage.
6 They slay the widow and the stranger,
And murder the fatherless.
7 Yet they say, The LORD shall not see,
Neither shall the God of Jacob regard *it*.

8 Understand, ye brutish among the people:
And ye fools, when will ye be wise?
9 He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?
He that formed the eye, shall he not see?
10 He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct?

by violence and extortion. *Thy people...thine inheritance*, as in xxviii. 9. Cp. Deut. iv. 20.

6. A proverbial expression for inhumanity and treachery. They do not scruple to murder the most defenceless, and those whose lives, by the traditions of Semitic hospitality, should have been inviolable. "From the earliest times of Semitic life the lawlessness of the desert .. has been tempered by the principle that the guest is inviolable....To harm a guest, or to refuse him hospitality, is an offence against honour, which covers the perpetrator with indelible shame." Robertson Smith, *Rel. of Semites*, p. 76. Cp. Ex. xxii. 21, 22; Ps. x. 14; Mal. iii. 5.

7. **And they say, Jah doth not see,**
Neither doth the God of Jacob consider.

They proclaim their contempt for Israel's God as one who is either ignorant of the sufferings of His people or indifferent to them (x. 11, 13; lix. 7). He is in their estimation but one among many gods of the nations (Is. xxxvi. 18 ff.).

8—11. From pleading with God the Psalmist turns to argue with those of his fellow-countrymen who are tempted to agree with their oppressors, and to think that Jehovah is wanting either in power or in will to defend them.

8. *Understand*] Consider. Those Israelites are addressed who lack the spiritual discernment to realise that in spite of the temporary triumph of the wicked Jehovah still rules (xcii. 6; lxxiii. 22).

when will ye be wise?] When will ye understand? a word used of the intelligent consideration of God's working in xiv. 2; lxiv. 9; cvi. 7.

9. It is absurd to suppose that the Creator of the organs of sense does not Himself possess faculties corresponding to them.

10. **He that instructeth the nations, shall not he rebuke?**] The word rendered *chastiseth* in A.V. includes the ideas of instruction, admonition, discipline, chastisement (LXX ὁ παιδεύων, Vulg. *qui corripit*, Jer. *qui erudit*). That rendered *correct* means to reprove, rebuke, call to account, punish (l. 21). This noteworthy passage stands almost by itself in the O.T. in its explicit assertion that there is a divine education of the nations, analogous to the divine education of Israel (Deut. viii. 5, &c.), an education which must involve fatherly correction and chastise-

He that teacheth man knowledge, *shall not he know?*
The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, 11
That they *are* vanity.
Blessed *is* the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, 12
And teachest him out of thy law;
That *thou* mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, 13

ment (Prov. iii. 12). It anticipates the teaching of St Paul in Rom. i. 20; ii. 14, 15. Yet long before this Amos had implicitly taught that a measure of moral knowledge is possessed by the heathen, for the right use of which they are responsible (Am. i, ii). Cp. also Ps. lxv. 2, and the general purport of the Book of Jonah.

he that teacheth &c.] We expect a question such as A.V. supplies, to complete the sentence. *shall not he know?* But instead of putting the question the poet breaks off abruptly, and substitutes the comprehensive affirmation of *v.* 11. It is prosaic to render as R.V., "even he that teacheth &c."

11. The positive answer to the self-delusion of the wicked and the doubts of the faithless. Jehovah not only sees their works, but knows their very thoughts.

that they are *vanity*] So the LXX quoted by St Paul in 1 Cor. iii. 20, with the substitution of *the wise* for *men* to suit his argument. This rendering gives a good sense, and suggests an emphatic contrast between the designs of men and the designs of God (xcii. 5). But the masculine pronoun *they* is more naturally referred to *man* than to the feminine word for *thoughts*, and its emphatic position further points to the rendering, **For they**, in contrast to Jehovah, **are (but) a breath** (xxxix. 5). How can man, the feeble creature of a day, escape the knowledge of the Omniscient and Eternal, or entertain designs which He cannot fathom?

12—15. The Psalmist consoles himself and his fellow-sufferers with the thought that they are being educated by God, and that, sooner or later, Right must have its rights.

12, 13. **Happy the man whom thou instructest, Jah,**
And teachest out of thy law,
To give him rest from the days of evil,
Until a pit be dug for the wicked.

Israel, as well as the nations (*v.* 10) is being divinely educated, and that with a higher teaching, the teaching of revelation. This will give him such an insight into the ways of God's Providence, as will enable him to endure calmly, without murmuring or losing heart, until the day of retribution overtakes the wicked. Cp. Hab. iii. 16. The A.V. rendering *chastenest* limits the meaning of the verb, which is the same as that in *v.* 10. But doubtless it includes the discipline of suffering which Israel was undergoing. Cp. Job v. 17; Prov. iii. 11, 12. The conception of life as a discipline and education is specially characteristic of the Book of Proverbs. The wise man welcomes it, but the fool rebels against it. *Thy law* is not limited to the Pentateuch or any

Until the pit be digged for the wicked.
14 For the LORD will not cast off his people,
Neither will he forsake his inheritance.
15 But judgment shall return unto righteousness:
And all the upright in heart shall follow it.

16 Who will rise up for me against the evildoers?
Or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?
17 Unless the LORD *had been* my help,
My soul had almost dwelt *in* silence.
18 When I said, My foot slippeth;
Thy mercy, O LORD, held me up.
19 In the multitude of my thoughts within me
Thy comforts delight my soul.

part of it, but is synonymous with the *word* of Jehovah, and includes all Divine revelation as the guide of life (i. 2). *The days of evil*, or, *of the evil man*, are the times when wrong and wrong-doers seem to have undisputed sway. Cp. xlix. 5.

until a pit &c.] Until the day of retribution comes, as it certainly will do; a metaphor from the pitfalls used by hunters. Cp. vii. 15; xxxv. 7; lvii. 6.

14. That day will come, for Jehovah cannot finally abandon His persecuted people (*v.* 5). Cp. 1 Sam. xii. 22; Jer. xii. 7; Rom. xi. 1, 2.

15. *But*] Or as R.V. For. Judgement will again be justice: i.e. its administration will once more be conducted upon principles of equity when those who now pervert it are destroyed; and all true-hearted men will attach themselves to it as its supporters and adherents.

16–19. Israel has no champion but Jehovah. Experience has proved His goodness. The Psalmist is partly speaking in the name of the people even when he uses the singular (*vv.* 16—18; *v.* 23, *our* God), partly expressing his own personal feelings (*v.* 19).

16. *Who will rise up* &c.] Who will stand up as my champion? It is not a question of doubt or unbelief, but an emphatic form of assertion that Israel has no helper but Jehovah.

17. Cp. cxxiv. 1 ff.

almost] R.V. soon.

dwelt in silence] The stillness of the grave (cxv. 17).

18. The A.V. misses the picturesqueness of the tenses. *When I said, My foot hath slipped, thy lovingkindness, Jehovah, was supporting me.* I gave myself up for lost, but the right hand of love had hold of me all the time. Cp. xxxviii. 16; xviii. 35.

19. *thoughts*] Or, as R.V. marg., *doubts*: distracting thoughts which *divide* and perplex the mind.

Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship *with* thee,
Which frameth mischief by a law?
They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous,
And condemn the innocent blood.
But the LORD is my defence;
And my God *is* the rock of my refuge.
And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity,
And shall cut them off in their own wickedness;
Yea, the LORD our God shall cut them off.

20—23. The doom of tyrants and the deliverance of their victims.

20. Though He may tolerate them for a time, it is inconceivable that Jehovah should let these rapacious judges shelter themselves under His authority. Cp. l. 21. *The throne* or *tribunal of destruction* (xci. 3, note) denotes the rulers or judges who were ready like a yawning gulf to swallow up the innocent. They contrive wrong by statute, inflict injury and misery under the shelter of legal forms. Cp. Is. x. 1, 2.

21. *They gather themselves together*] So the Targ. and Jer., possibly reading *yāgūrū*, as in lvi. 6; lix. 3. The Mass. text however seems to mean *they make raids upon the life of the righteous.*

condemn the innocent blood] I.e. condemn the innocent to death.

22, 23. The R.V. renders, *But the LORD hath been my high tower... and he hath brought upon them their own iniquity.* But the latter clauses of *v.* 23 shew that the punishment of the wicked is still in the future, and it is best to regard the tenses as expressive of certainty: **But Jehovah will surely prove a high tower for me, and my God shall be the rock of my refuge.** Cp. xviii. 2; ix. 9, &c.

and he shall bring upon them &c.] Cause their wrong-doing to recoil upon their own heads. Cp. *v.* 2; liv. 5.

in their own wickedness] Or, *for their evil*: or perhaps, *through their own evil.* Cp. v. 10; vii. 15, 16; ix. 16.

PSALM XCV.

This Psalm consists of two parts, an invitation to worship, and a warning against disobedience.

i. The call to worship Jehovah because He is the Lord of all the world (1—5) is followed by a reiterated call to worship Him because He is in an especial way the God of Israel (6, 7).

ii. The worshippers are solemnly warned not to repeat the sin of their ancestors in the wilderness (8—11).

This is the first of a group of Psalms (xcv—c) strongly marked by common characteristics and obviously intended for liturgical use. The key-note of them has already been struck in Ps. xciii, which forms

a prelude to them, and should be studied in connexion with them. It seems highly probable that they were composed for the Dedication of the Second Temple in B.C. 516, and that the Septuagint titles of Ps. xcvi, *When the house was being built after the Captivity*, and Ps. xcvii, *When his land was being settled*, preserve a true tradition as to their date.

They are the lyrical echo of Is. xl—lxvi, Ps. xcviii in particular being full of resemblances to that collection of prophecies.

In the humiliation of Babylon and the restoration of Israel, Jehovah had proved Himself the sovereign of the world, supreme over all the gods of the heathen. He had vindicated His judicial righteousness and manifested His faithfulness to Israel. The joy of the deliverance culminated in the Dedication of the Temple. That event was the outward expression of the thought that He had once more seated Himself on His throne in Zion, not as the King of Israel only, but as the King of all the world.

But that event might well be an occasion not only for rejoicing but for warning. The deliverance from Babylon was the counterpart of the deliverance from Egypt. What if Israel of the Restoration should tempt Jehovah by faithlessness and disobedience as Israel in the wilderness had done? And therefore this Psalmist hears God's voice tempering their exultation with salutary admonition. Such is the connexion of thought between the two parts of Ps. xcv. The words of *v.* 7 *a*, *b* which recall the care of Jehovah for His people in the wilderness lead up most naturally to the hope that now at least Israel may be obedient (7 *c*), and that hope is fitly followed by the solemn words of divine warning in *vv.* 8—11.

Some critics hold that this Psalm, like Ps. lxxxi, with which it has much in common, is a combination of two separate fragments; but in neither case is such a hypothesis necessary.

In appointing this Psalm, sometimes called the 'Invitatory Psalm,' for daily use as an introduction to the Psalms for the day, the English Church follows a primitive and general usage. "Before the beginning of their prayers," writes Athanasius of the practice of the Church of Constantinople, "Christians invite and exhort one another in the words of this Psalm." In the Western Church the whole Psalm appears to have been generally used. In the Eastern Church an invitatory founded on it is used at the commencement of service. See Daniel, *On the Prayer Book*, p. 88.

95 O come, let us sing unto the LORD:
Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

1, 2. A call to unite in worshipping Jehovah.

1. O come, let us sing aloud unto Jehovah:
Let us shout unto the Rock of our salvation.

Let us greet our God, Whose power has been manifested in the deliverance of His people, with the anthems and acclamations which befit a victorious King. Cp. xlvii. 1; lxvi. 1; lxxxix. 26; xciv. 22.

Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, 2
And make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.
For the LORD *is* a great God, 3
And a great King above all gods.
In his hand *are* the deep places of the earth: 4
The strength of the hills *is* his also.
The sea *is* his, and he made it: 5
And his hands formed the dry *land*.
O come, let us worship and bow down: 6
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.

2. **Let us present ourselves before his face with thanksgiving,**
Let us shout unto him with psalms.

Let us present ourselves before Him in His Temple, bringing with us the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Cp. Mic. vi. 6; Ps. l. 14, 23.

3—5. The reason for this service:— His greatness as the supreme King, the Lord of the world.

3. The thoughts of the greatness of Jehovah, of His sovereignty, and of His supremacy over the gods of the heathen, are characteristic of this group of Psalms. They are not new thoughts (Ex. xv. 11, 18), but fresh reality had been given to them by His revelation of Himself in the humiliation of Babylon and its gods, and the deliverance of Israel.

That the Psalmist attributes any real existence to the gods of the heathen is not to be supposed. They are mere idols, things of nought (xcvi. 5), gods in name but not in reality. He cannot have gone back from the teaching of Jer. x. 3 ff., in which the living God, the Eternal King, the Creator, is contrasted with helpless perishable idols; or have forgotten the scathing sarcasms of Is. xl. 18 ff.; xliv. 9 ff.

4. **In whose hand are the secret depths of earth,**
And to whom the peaks of the mountains belong.

The depths of the earth which cannot be explored by man (Job xxxviii. 16; Jer. xxxi. 37), the soaring mountain peaks upon which man cannot set his foot, are all under His control.

The meaning of the word for *peaks* is doubtful; but it probably means *eminences* (LXX, Jer.) rather than *strength*.

5. **Whose is the sea, for HE made it;**
And the dry land, which his hands formed.

Cp. xxiv. 1; lxxxix. 11.

6, 7. A renewed call to worship Jehovah, on the ground of His relation to Israel.

6. Let us offer the lowliest homage expressive of humility and submission to His Will, in contrast to that obstinacy of heart (*v.* 8) which was the ruin of our fathers.

our Maker] It is the 'making' of Israel into a nation, rather than

7 For he *is* our God;
And we *are* the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

To day if ye will hear his voice,
8 Harden not your heart, as *in* the provocation,
And as *in* the day of temptation in the wilderness:
9 When your fathers tempted me,
Proved me, and saw my work.

the creation of individuals, that is meant. Cp. Deut. xxxii. 6, 15, 18; Is. xliv. 2; li. 13; liv. 5; Ps. c. 3; cxix. 2.

7. *our God*] P.B.V. *the Lord our God*, from the Vulg.

the people &c.] The people whom He shepherds, the flock which is His own especial charge. Cp. lxxiv. 1, note.

To day if ye will hear &c.] The A.V. follows the LXX in taking this clause as the protasis to *v.* 8. But here the Psalmist is still speaking ('his voice'), while in *v.* 8 God speaks; and it is better to take it as a wish, Oh that to-day ye would hearken to his voice! Cp. Deut. v. 29. As the Psalmist recalls God's care for His people in the wilderness, He cannot forget their thankless disobedience, and the earnest wish springs to his lips that this generation may not repeat the sin of their forefathers. This wish leads up naturally to the solemn warning of *vv.* 8—11. *To day* is emphatic, and has a special significance if the Psalm was sung at the Dedication of the Second Temple: *now*, in contrast to that former time; *now*, when Jehovah has visibly manifested His goodness; *now*, while the door of opportunity lies open before you. *His voice* is not merely the words which follow, but all His message. Cp. Deut. iv. 30.

8—11. Jehovah speaks, warning Israel not to repeat the sins of obstinacy and unbelief by which their ancestors provoked Him.

8. Harden not your heart, as at Meribah,
As in the day of Massah in the wilderness (R.V.).

Meribah, *Strife*, and Massah, *Temptation*, were the names given to the scene of the murmuring at Rephidim at the beginning of the wandering (Ex. xvii. 1—7); and the scene of the murmuring at Kadesh in the fortieth year was also called Meribah (Num. xx. 1—13). The A.V. follows the LXX and other Ancient Versions in translating the words, but they should certainly be retained as proper names. Cp. Deut. xxxiii. 8; Ps. lxxxi. 7.

9. The Israelites tempted and tried God by faithless doubts of His goodness and arbitrary demands that He should prove His power (Ex. xvii. 2, 7; Ps. lxxviii. 18, 41, 56).

and saw my work] While they on their part tempted God, He on His part was ever working out His providential plan, by mercy and by chastisement. But it suits the context better to render, Though they

Forty years long was I grieved with *this* genera- 10
tion,
And said, It *is* a people that do err in *their* heart,
And they have not known my ways:
Unto whom I sware in my wrath 11
That they should not enter into my rest.

had seen my work. (For the construction cp. Neh. vi. 1.) Though they had just had proof of God's power and goodwill in the Exodus, it had not taught them to trust Him. Cp. Num. xiv. 22.

10. *was I grieved*] The Heb. is stronger; did I loathe (Ezek. vi. 9).

this *generation*] "*This*" is not in the Heb., which seems to mean, *with a (whole) generation*. But it is better to read with LXX and Jer., with that generation.

And I said, They are a people whose heart goeth astray,
And they know not my ways.

Wandering from the right way (lviii. 3; Is. xxix. 24; liii. 6); incapable of understanding the leadings of God's Providence (lxxxi. 13).

11. Unto *whom* &c.] Or, Wherefore I sware. See Num. xiv. 21 ff.

my rest] The Promised Land. Cp. Deut. xii. 9.

vv. 7*c*—11 are quoted in Heb. iii. 7—11, and applied in detail as a warning to Christians who were in danger of unbelief, lest they too should fail to reach the rest promised to them. The quotation follows the LXX with some slight variations. In Heb. iv. 7, *vv.* 7*c*, 8*a* are introduced by the words "saying in David," i.e. 'in the person of David,' not 'in the book of David.' The author may have followed the LXX title, or, according to the common mode of speaking, regarded David as the author of the whole Psalter.

PSALM XCVI.

This spirited Psalm opens the series of 'coronation anthems' which are the response to the invitation of Ps. xcv, and form a lyrical counterpart to the prophecies of Is. xl—lxvi. Its occasion, as we have seen in the Introd. to Ps. xcv, is in all probability rightly indicated by the LXX title, *When the house was being built after the Captivity*. In the recent deliverance of Israel the Psalmist sees the earnest of the establishment of the universal Divine kingdom of righteousness, and he looks forward to the new Temple becoming "a house of prayer for all the peoples." The liturgical use of such Psalms as this served to keep alive the Messianic hope in Israel, and to prepare the way for the Advent of God in Christ. See *Introd.* p. lxxxi.

The Psalm consists of four stanzas.

i. Let Jehovah's praise be sung and His glory proclaimed among all the nations (1—3).

ii. For He alone is supremely great and glorious (4—6).

iii. Let the nations acknowledge Him and pay Him homage in His Temple (7—9).

iv. Let His proclamation of His kingdom be made known throughout the world, and let universal Nature rejoice in the establishment of His righteous rule (10—13).

With some omissions and variations this Psalm forms part (vv. 23—33) of the composite anthem which the Chronicler represents as sung to celebrate the translation of the Ark to Zion (1 Chron. xvi. 8 ff.); and this may be the reason why it is called in the LXX *A Psalm of David*, inconsistently with the earlier part of the title *When the house was [to be] built after the Captivity*. It is hardly necessary to remark that it is quite impossible to regard the Chronicler's Psalm as the original of which this Psalm is a fragment detached for liturgical use.

96 O sing unto the LORD a new song:
Sing unto the LORD, all the earth.
2 Sing unto the LORD, bless his name;
Shew forth his salvation from day to day.
3 Declare his glory among the heathen,
His wonders among all people.
4 For the LORD *is* great, and greatly to be praised:
He *is* to be feared above all gods.
5 For all the gods of the nations *are* idols:

1—3. A call to the universal praise of Jehovah.

1. *O sing unto the LORD a new song*] From Is. xlii. 10. Cp. xcviii. 1; cxlix. 1; xxxiii. 3. Fresh mercies demand fresh expressions of thanksgiving, and the deliverance of Israel from Babylon inaugurates a new stage in the nation's history. *All the earth* is summoned to join in Israel's thanksgiving (c. 1).

2. *Shew forth* &c.] Lit., **Proclaim the good tidings** (LXX. εὐαγγελίζεσθε) **of his salvation**, the deliverance which He has wrought for Israel, **from day to day**, renewing your praises with each returning day, for such a revelation of infinite mercy demands unceasing celebration. Cp. Is. lii. 7.

vv. 1 *b*, 2 *b* are combined in 1 Chron. xvi. 23, *vv.* 1 *a*, 2 *a* being omitted.

3. **Tell of his glory among the nations,**
His marvellous works among all the peoples.

Cp. Is. lxvi. 18; and see note on Ps. ix. 1.

4—6. Jehovah's worthiness to be praised.

4. The first line is borrowed from xlviii. 1 *a* (cp. cxlv. 3): the second combines xlvii. 2 and xcv. 3. Cp. Deut. vii. 21; x. 17.

5. **For all the gods of the peoples are things of nought** [or, idols]; powerless, nay, non-existent. Cp. the argument of **Is. xl.** 18 ff.; xliv. 9 ff.

But the LORD made the heavens.
Honour and majesty *are* before him:
Strength and beauty *are* in his sanctuary.
Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people,
Give unto the LORD glory and strength.
Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name:
Bring an offering, and come into his courts.
O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness:
Fear before him, all the earth.
Say among the heathen *that* the LORD reigneth:

but the LORD &c.] The appeal to the works of creation as a proof of Jehovah's power occurs frequently in Is. xl—lxvi. See xl. 22; xlii. 5; xliv. 24.

6. The attributes of *honour* and *majesty* (civ. 1) are perhaps personified, and regarded as attendants standing in God's Presence. *Strength* and *beauty* are terms applied in lxxviii. 61 to the Ark, the symbol of His Presence. The *sanctuary* is not heaven, but the restored Temple, where with the eye of faith the Psalmist sees the glory of Jehovah returning to dwell, although the Ark was no longer there to represent it. Cp. Is. lx. 13. 1 Chron. xvi. 27 reads "Strength and gladness are in his place," possibly to adapt the Psalm for the occasion when the Temple did not yet exist.

7—9. An appeal to the nations to acknowledge Jehovah. These verses are a free imitation of xxix. 1, 2.

7. *O ye kindreds of the people*] Ye families of the peoples. Cp. xxii. 27; Am. iii. 2.

8. The glory of his name is given to Jehovah when He is acknowledged as the One Living and True God. The *offering* is the 'present' which subjects bring to their lord in token of their submission (2 Sam. viii. 2). Cp. Is. lx. 5 ff.

For *into his courts* 1 Chron. xvi. 29 reads *before him*, to suit the time when the Temple was not yet built.

9. *in the beauty of holiness*] In holy array. See on xxix. 2. "As the priests were to minister only in 'holy attire' (Ex. xxviii. 2) so must the nations be now clothed with holiness" (Kay).

10—13. Proclaim that Jehovah is King, and let universal Nature rejoice in the prospect of His righteous rule.

10. Say among the nations, Jehovah hath proclaimed himself King. The message to the nations resembles the message to Zion, Is. lii. 7. By His recent action He has proclaimed Himself King not of Israel only but of all the world. Cp. xciii. 1.

The Old Latin Version as preserved in the *Psalterium Romanum* (*Introd.* p. lxxii.) contains the famous reading *Dominus regnavit a ligno*, 'The Lord hath reigned from the tree,' which is quoted by many of the Latin Fathers from Tertullian onwards as a prophecy of Christ's triumph

The world also shall be established *that* it shall not be moved:
He shall judge the people righteously.
11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.
12 Let the field be joyful, and all that *is* therein:
Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice

through) death. Justin Martyr appears to be the only certain Greek authority for the addition[1]. He treats the Psalm as a prophecy of Christ's reign after His crucifixion (*Apol.* i. 41, and in the *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* c. 73) he charges the Jews with having falsified the text by erasing the words *from the tree* (ἀπὸ τοῦ ξύλου). The charge is groundless. Doubtless the words were simply a Christian gloss on the text, which had no wide currency, except through the Old Latin Version. No MSS. of the LXX contain them except the transliterated Graeco-Latin *Psalterium Veronense*, which has *apo xylu*, and cod. 156, which has the barbarism ἀπὸ τῷ ξύλῳ. In both cases the reading was probably introduced from the Old Latin.

The words have however been familiarised by Dr Neale's translation of the hymn *Vexilla regis prodeunt*, 'The royal banners forward go' (by Venantius Fortunatus, bishop of Poitiers, † A.D. 609),

"Impleta sunt quae concinit
David fideli carmine,
Dicendo in nationibus
Regnavit a ligno Deus."

"Fulfilled is now what David told,
In true prophetic song of old;
How God the heathen's king should be,
For God is reigning from the Tree."

the world also &c.] Yea, the world shall be established that it be not shaken. So xciii. 1 c. On the reading *he hath ordered the world*, represented by the LXX, Symm. and Jer., see note there.

he shall judge &c.] He shall minister judgement unto the peoples in equity. From ix. 8 *b*, cp. vii. 8. The first and third lines of this verse are omitted in Chron.

11. **Let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice** (R.V.)] Such appeals to Nature to rejoice in the redemption of Israel are characteristic of the later Isaiah (xliv. 23; xlix. 13). In the establishment of God's righteous rule the Psalmist sees the prelude of the Messianic age which is to bring harmony and peace to all creation. Cp. Is. xi. 1 ff.; xxxv. 1 ff.; lv. 12, 13; Rom. viii. 19 ff.

roar] Lit. thunder. Cp. xcviii. 7.

the fulness thereof] I.e. *all that is therein*, as the same word is rendered in Is. xlii. 10. Cp. Ps. xxiv. 1.

12. *be joyful, rejoice*] Exult...sing for joy (R.V.). *Then* is significant: in that age when the Divine kingdom is universally established.

[1] Possibly there may be an allusion to this reading in the Ep. of Barnabas, c. viii., ὅτι ἡ βασιλεία Ἰησοῦ ἐπὶ ξύλου.

Before the LORD, for he cometh, 13
For he cometh to judge the earth:
He shall judge the world with righteousness,
And the people with his truth.

13. Jehovah comes to establish His righteous rule on earth. The predominant aspect of *judgement* here is not punishment but government, although no doubt government must include punishment (Is. xi. 3, 4). The verse recurs in xcviii. 9; and it is an echo of ix. 8.

and the people with his truth] Rather, and the peoples in his faithfulness. Cp. xcii. 2.

The last two lines are omitted in Chron.

PSALM XCVII.

Once more the Psalmist celebrates Jehovah's recent manifestation of His sovereignty. In Ps. xcvi the universality of His kingdom, here the judgement by which it has been manifested, is the prominent thought.

i. Earth is bidden to rejoice at the establishment of Jehovah's kingdom. The awfulness of His Advent, the moral foundation of His rule, and the irresistibleness of His might are described (1—3).

ii. But lately the earth has trembled at His Presence; His righteousness and His majesty have been openly proclaimed (4—6).

iii. The idol-worshippers and their pretended gods are put to shame, while Zion rejoices in His triumph (7—9).

iv. Let Israel respond to His call by dutiful obedience and glad thanksgiving (10—12).

Thus the Psalm consists, like Ps. xcvi, of four equal stanzas. The first two describe the coming of Jehovah to judgement, in symbolic language borrowed from descriptions of the great Theophanies of old; the last two describe its consequences for Israel and for the nations.

The author of this Psalm was not an original poet, but he was a masterly hymn-writer. There is scarcely a phrase in the Psalm which is not borrowed; but he combines the language of earlier Psalmists and Prophets into a "costly mosaic" with a skill which is worthy of the occasion. He makes us feel that he has been deeply moved, and inspired to recognise the greatness of the crisis.

In the LXX the Psalm is entitled (*A Psalm*) *of David, when his land was restored*[1]. The latter part of this title rightly points to the Restoration from Babylon as the occasion of the Psalm.

[1] For καθίσταται, Vulg. restituta est, cf. Is. xlix. 8, τοῦ καταστῆσαι τὴν γῆν

97 The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice;
Let the multitude of isles be glad *thereof.*
2 Clouds and darkness *are* round about him:
Righteousness and judgment *are* the habitation of his throne.
3 A fire goeth before him,
And burneth up his enemies round about.
4 His lightnings enlightened the world:
The earth saw, and trembled.
5 The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD,
At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.
6 The heavens declare his righteousness,
And all the people see his glory.

1—3. The proclamation of Jehovah's kingdom of power and righteousness.

1. *The LORD reigneth*] **Jehovah hath proclaimed himself King.** See note on xciii. 1. For the whole verse cp. xcvi. 10, 11; Is. xlii. 10—12; li. 5.

the multitude of isles] Lit. *many isles*, or, *coastlands*; a favourite word in Is. xl—lxvi; cp. Ps. lxxii. 10. All the many islands and coastlands of the Mediterranean are meant, which have good cause to share Zion's joy at the fall of the tyrant and the rise of the Divine kingdom of righteousness.

2, 3. Though Jehovah shrouds himself in mystery, and comes with irresistible might, it is the consolation of His people to know that His kingdom is founded upon righteousness. Here, as elsewhere (xviii. 9, 11, &c.), the Theophany of Sinai supplies the symbolism. Cp. Ex. xix. 16; xx. 21; Deut. v. 22.

righteousness &c.] **Righteousness and judgement are the foundation of his throne** (R.V.).

2*b* is taken from Ps. lxxxix. 14*a*: with *v.* 3 cp. Ps. l. 3; Deut. iv. 24; Is. xlii. 25

4—6. The recent manifestation of Jehovah's power, described in terms of the great Theophanies of old.

4. **His lightnings lightened the world,** as of old when He brought Israel out of Egypt. From lxxvii. 18*b*.

the earth &c.] Based upon lxxvii. 16, 18: cp. xcvi. 9*b*.

5. From Mic. i. 4; iv. 13; cp. Zech. iv. 14; vi. 5. The dissolution of the most solid and ancient parts of the earth is the expression of its terror and the measure of His power. Cp. Hab. iii. 6.

6. **The heavens have declared his righteousness,**
And all the peoples have seen his glory.

His faithfulness to His people and His sovereign justice in the punishment of evil have been openly and visibly manifested in the sight of all the world (xcviii. 3). Cp. l. 6; Is. xxxv. 2; xl. 5; lii. 10; lxvi. 18.

Confounded be all they that serve graven images, 7
That boast themselves of idols:
Worship him, all ye gods.
Zion heard, and was glad, 8
And the daughters of Judah rejoiced,
Because of thy judgments, O LORD.
For thou, LORD, *art* High above all the earth: 9
Thou art exalted far above all gods.
Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: 10
He preserveth the souls of his saints;

7—9. The impression produced by the judgement.

7. **Ashamed shall be all that serve graven images**] Dismayed at the impotence of their gods. The Babylonians in particular are meant. Cp. Is. xlii. 17; xliv. 9; Jer. x. 14.

idols] **Things of nought**, as xcvi. 5.

worship him, all ye gods] The A.V. follows the LXX and Jer. in rendering the verb as an imperative, but more probably the words are not an ironical challenge but an assertion, **all gods worship him.** It need not be supposed that the Psalmist regarded the gods of the heathen as having any real existence. The LXX rendering *worship him all his angels* (cp. LXX of viii. 5) may however have been suggested by an unwillingness to seem to countenance such an idea; at the same time it may point to a wider meaning of the Psalmist's words. All supernatural beings, whether really existing or existing only in the minds of their worshippers, must do homage to Jehovah. The quotation in Heb. i. 6 may be taken from this passage or from the LXX expansion of Deut. xxxii. 43.

8. From xlviii. 11, but with a significant change. Then (*v.* 8) the deliverance was wrought in sight of the city; now Zion and the cities of Judah only *hear* the glad tidings brought from distant Babylon to Zion in her humiliation (Is. lii. 7, 8).

9. **For thou, Jehovah, art the Most High above all the earth,**
Thou art exceedingly exalted above all gods.

From lxxxiii. 18; xlvii. 2, 9: cp. **xcv. 3.**

10—12. The duty and the confidence of Israel.

10. There is no need to alter the text as some modern critics would do, and read, *They that love Jehovah hate evil*; or, *Jehovah loveth those that hate evil.* An exhortation to those who love Jehovah to prove themselves what they profess to be by positive abhorrence of all that is antagonistic to Him was not superfluous, in an age when many an Israelite might still be tempted to half-hearted service. It corresponds to the warning of xcv. 7 ff. For the language of the whole verse cp. Amos v. 15; Ps. xxxvii. 28; xxxiv. 20.

his saints] **His beloved, or, his godly ones.** See Appendix, Note I.

He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.

11 Light is sown for the righteous,
And gladness for the upright in heart.
12 Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous;
And give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

11. *Light is sown*] The idea is rather that of the diffusion of light at the dawn than of a seed sown to bear fruit hereafter. For the metaphor cp. Lucr. ii. 211, "Sol lumine *conserit* arva"; and Verg. *Aen.* iv. 584, "Et iam prima novo *spargebat* lumine terras ..Aurora." But most of the Ancient Versions represent the reading. **Light hath arisen for the righteous**, as in cxii. 4 (cp. civ. 22), and this is probably right. So the P.B.V. *There is sprung up a light*, from the LXX through the Vulg. For *light* as a metaphor for happiness and prosperity cp. xxvii. 1; xxxvi. 9.

12. Be glad in Jehovah, ye righteous;
And give thanks unto his holy name.

His holy name, lit. *the memorial of his holiness*. His name is that which brings to remembrance all that He is and does. See Ex. iii. 15; Ps. cxxxv. 13.

The first line is from xxxii. 11 *a*; the second from xxx. 4 *b*.

PSALM XCVIII.

Another anthem of praise for the redemption of Israel from Babylon. It begins and ends like Ps. xcvi, and much of its language is borrowed from Isaiah xl—lxvi. It consists of three equal stanzas. Sing praise to Jehovah for the redemption of Israel (1—3). Let all the earth salute Him as King (4—6); let all Nature rejoice at His Advent (7—9).

This is the only Psalm which bears the title *Mizmōr*, 'A Psalm,' without any addition. The LXX has *A Psalm of David*.

It is fitly appointed as an alternative for the *Magnificat* at Evening Prayer. The hymn of praise for the Redemption of Israel from Babylon becomes in the mouth of the Christian Church a hymn of praise for the Redemption of the world.

A Psalm.

98 O sing unto the LORD a new song;
For he hath done marvellous *things:*
His right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.

1—3. Praise Jehovah for the glorious salvation which He has wrought.

1. *O sing unto the LORD a new song*] So xcvi. 1 *a*.
marvellous things] Cp. xcvi. 3 *b*.
his **own** *right hand, and his holy arm*, **hath wrought salvation for**

The LORD hath made known his salvation:
His righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.
He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the 3
house of Israel:
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: 4
Make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing *praise*.
Sing unto the LORD with the harp; 5
With the harp, and the voice of a psalm.
With trumpets and sound of cornet 6
Make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King.

him] He needed no help: His own might was all-sufficient to deliver Israel from Babylon. Cp. Is. lii. 10; lix. 16; lxiii. 5; Ps. xliv. 3. The restoration from the Exile was a second Exodus, and this 'new song' is an echo of the ancient 'Song of Moses.' Cp. Ex. xv. 2, 6, 11, 12.

2. **Jehovah hath made known his salvation:**
In the sight of the nations hath he revealed his righteousness.

Cp. Is. lvi. 1. The juxtaposition of *salvation* and *righteousness* is characteristic of Is. xl—lxvi. The deliverance of Israel is the outcome and the visible manifestation of Jehovah's faithfulness to His covenant. Cp. Ps. lxxi. 15.

3. *He hath remembered*] Though Israel in its despair said, "Jehovah hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me" (Is. xlix. 14), the confidence of the earlier prophet (Mic. vii. 20) was not misplaced.

his mercy and his truth] His lovingkindness and his faithfulness. Cp. lxxxix. 1 ff.; xcii. 2; Luke i. 54.

all the ends &c.] The prediction of Is. lii. 10 has been fulfilled.

4—6. Let all the earth salute its King.

4. **Shout unto Jehovah, all the earth;**
Break forth and sing for joy, yea, make melody.

Salute Jehovah with the gladsome shouts and music and blare of trumpets (*v.* 6) and clapping of hands (*v.* 8) which are the proper greeting for a king upon his accession. See on Ps. xlvii. 1, 5—8; xcv. 1, 2; and cp. 1 Sam. x. 24; 1 Kings i. 39; 2 Kings xi. 12, 14.

Break forth and sing for joy is from Is. lii. 9: cp. xliv. 23; xlix. 13; liv. 1.

5. **Make melody unto Jehovah with the harp:**
With the harp and the sound of melody.

Cp. Is. li. 3.

6. The 'trumpet' was a straight metal tube, like the sacred trumpets represented on the arch of Titus: the 'cornet' was originally a ram's horn,

7 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof;
The world, and they that dwell therein.
8 Let the floods clap *their* hands:
Let the hills be joyful together
9 Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth:
With righteousness shall he judge the world,
And the people with equity.

perhaps in later times a metal instrument of the same shape. See the illustrations in Driver's *Joel and Amos* in this Series, p. 144.

7—9. Let universal Nature swell the chorus of rejoicing.

7. **Let the sea thunder, as** xcvi. 11*b*.
the world &c.] From xxiv. 1.
8. **Let the rivers clap their hands;**
Let the mountains sing for joy together.
Cp. Is. lv. 12; and for the prosopopoeia, Hab. iii. 10.
9. Cp. xcvi. 13.

PSALM XCIX.

Jehovah's fresh proclamation of His sovereignty is once more the initial watchword, as in Pss. xciii and xcvii (cp. xcvi. 10), and doubtless this Psalm belongs to the same period. Its distinctive idea is expressed in the threefold refrain (*vv.* 3, 5, 9). It is a call to all nations, and especially to His own people, to worship Jehovah as the thrice Holy God. The unceasing adoration which is evoked in heaven by the contemplation of the absolute moral perfection of God (Is. vi. 3) should find an echo upon earth.

The Psalm consists of three stanzas: the refrain in *vv.* 3, 5, 9 may possibly have been intended to be sung as a liturgical response.

The universal sovereignty of Jehovah who has established His throne in Zion (1—3); the righteous character of His rule in Israel (4, 5); and His faithfulness in His dealings with His people manifested in their history (6—9), are successively celebrated; and each stanza ends with a call to worship and extol Him as the Holy God; the first (3) addressed to the nations, the second and third (5, 9) to Israel.

99 The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble:
He sitteth *between* the cherubims; let the earth be moved.

1—3. Jehovah has proclaimed Himself King in Zion: let all the earth worship this Holy God.

1. **Jehovah hath proclaimed himself King; the peoples tremble:**
Even he that sitteth enthroned upon the cherubim; the earth shaketh.

The LORD *is* great in Zion; 2
And he *is* high above all the people.
Let them praise thy great and terrible name; 3
For it *is* holy.

The king's strength also loveth judgment; 4
Thou dost establish equity,
Thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.
Exalt ye the LORD our God, 5
And worship at his footstool;
For he *is* holy.

Moses and Aaron among his priests, 6

When Jehovah manifests His sovereignty the nations must needs tremble with awe (Is. lxiv. 2), and all the earth must confess His majesty (Ps. lxxvii. 18). The title *he that sitteth enthroned upon the cherubim* (lxxx. 1) suggests the thought that He Who is supremely exalted in heaven has yet in time past condescended to dwell among His people on earth (1 Sam. iv. 4; 2 Sam. vi. 2; 2 Kings xix. 15).

2. Jehovah is great in Zion;
And he is high above all the peoples.

Zion is the seat of His universal sovereignty on earth. Cp. xlviii. 1; Is. lvii. 15.

3. *thy great and terrible name*] Cp. xlvii. 2; cxi. 9; Deut. vii. 21.

for *it* is *holy*] A possible rendering; cp. Is. lvii. 15; but the parallels of *vv.* 5, 9 point rather to the rendering of R.V., **Holy is he.** His highest claim to adoration is His absolute moral perfection. Cp. xxii. 3 note.

4, 5. The righteous character of Jehovah's kingdom.

4. *The king's strength also loveth judgment*] The construction of this clause is doubtful, but this is the simplest way of taking it. The objection that *strength* cannot properly be said to love is prosaic. The rendering, **And the strength of a king who loveth judgement hast thou established in equity,** is possible but cumbrous. The king is Jehovah Himself (cp. Is. lxi. 8). THOU is emphatic: it is He Himself Who has established a kingdom of righteousness, fulfilling the ideal of the Davidic kingdom (Is. xvi. 5): and by the recent deliverance of Israel He has given proof of its character.

5. *his footstool*] In 1 Chr. xxviii. 2 the Ark is called Jehovah's footstool, and so too probably in Ps. cxxxii. 7; but as there was no Ark in the Second Temple, the Temple itself must be meant here, or possibly (cp. *v.* 9) Zion. Cp. Lam. ii. 1; Is. lx. 13; lxvi. 1 (of the earth).

for *he* is *holy*] **Holy is he.**

6—9. The holiness of Jehovah demonstrated by His dealings with Israel.

Two interpretations of these verses deserve consideration. (1) They

And Samuel among them that call upon his name;
They called upon the LORD, and he answered them.

may be understood, as in the A.V., as a historical retrospect, offered for the encouragement and warning of Israel of the restoration. Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, were prevailing intercessors in past time. God revealed Himself to His people, answering their prayers, but punishing while He pardoned, in order to demonstrate His holiness. That history, it is implied, will be repeated. God will still answer prayer, and reveal Himself to Israel; but when Israel sins and forgets that Jehovah is a Holy God. He must needs punish even when He pardons.

(2) They may however be taken to refer to the present, thus:

6. A Moses and an Aaron are among his priests.
And a Samuel among those that call upon his name:
When they call unto Jehovah, HE answereth them.
7. In the pillar of cloud he speaketh unto them.
When they keep his testimonies, and the statute which he hath given them.
8. Jehovah our God, THOU hast answered them:
A pardoning God hast thou proved thyself unto them,
But an avenger of their doings withal.

Before the captivity Jehovah had said (Jer. xv. 1), "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people." But now He has relented. Intercessors like those of old have been found among His faithful servants: He has still continued to reveal Himself to Israel as He did of old in the wilderness. And now he has answered their prayers by the deliverance of His people from Babylon. They have been forgiven, though they have had to bear the punishment of their sins.

The general purport of the verses is the same, whichever view is adopted; but the second interpretation appears to be preferable, as bringing them into a closer relation to the occasion of the Psalm.

The notion that Moses Aaron and Samuel are spoken of as still interceding in heaven, like Onias and Jeremiah in 2 Macc. xv. 12 ff., is wholly improbable.

6. It was the office of the priests to intercede and mediate between God and man. This priestly function was exercised by Moses when Israel was fighting with Amalek (Ex. xvii. 11 ff.), when they sinned by worshipping the calf (Ex. xxxii. 30 ff.; Deut. ix. 18 ff.), and when they murmured on the return of the spies (Num. xiv. 13 ff.). It is to such occasions as these that the Psalmist refers, rather than to his exercise of priestly functions in the ratification of the covenant at Sinai (Ex. xxiv. 6 f.), or in the dedication of the Tabernacle (Ex. xl. 22 ff.), or in the consecration of Aaron and his sons (Lev. viii). For an example of Aaron's mediation see Num. xvi. 46 ff. Samuel too was famous for the prevailing efficacy of his prayers. See 1 Sam. vii. 8, 9; xii. 16 ff.; and cp. Ecclus. xlvi. 16. In the clause when they call &c. all true Israelites seem to be included.

He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar:
They kept his testimonies, and the ordinance *that* he gave them.
Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God:
Thou wast a God that forgavest them,
Though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.
Exalt the LORD our God,
And worship at his holy hill;
For the LORD our God *is* holy.

7. He reveals Himself once more as He spoke to His people of old by the mediation of Moses. See Ex. xxxiii. 7 ff. The second line virtually expresses the condition of prevailing prayer—obedience to the revealed will of God.

8. **A pardoning God** &c.] The reference here must be to the whole nation. This is the lesson which its history has taught it concerning God's character. If He pardons in answer to prayer, He must still vindicate His holiness by chastisement, lest men should imagine that He makes light of sin. See Ex. xxxiv. 7; Num. xiv. 20 ff.; and the prophet's touching identification of himself with the guilty people in Mic. vii. 9 ff.

9. A final call to worship the God of Israel in Zion, in His holy mountain (ii. 6; Is. lxvi. 20), **for holy is Jehovah our God.**

PSALM C.

"Moreover the strangers...will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer...for my house shall be called an house of prayer for all the peoples" (Is. lvi. 6, 7). The invitation of this Psalm corresponds to the prediction of the prophet: and the series of anthems for the dedication of the restored Temple which begins in Ps. xcv with a call to Israel to worship ends fitly with a call to the whole earth to join in Israel's worship, acknowledging Jehovah as the only true God, Whose claims upon the allegiance of the whole world have been attested by His recent mercy to Israel. Verses 1, 2, 4, are an echo of xcv. 1, 2; *v.* 3 of xcv. 7; and parallels to most of the language are to be found in the other Psalms of this group.

The liturgical history of this Psalm is of special interest. The title should probably be rendered **A Psalm for the thankoffering** (R.V. marg.), rather than simply *A Psalm of thanksgiving* (R.V.). It refers to the use of the Psalm in the Second Temple in connexion with the sacrifices of thanksgiving (Lev. vii. 11 ff.). For similar notices see the titles of Pss. xxxviii, lxx, xcii. The general character of its contents makes it probable that it was not specially written for the purpose, but adopted on account of *v.* 4.

From ancient times it has been used in the daily service of the Synagogue, except upon certain festivals. It was used in the early morning service of Lauds, and at the revision of the Prayer Book in 1552 it was added as an alternative for the *Benedictus*. The metrical version of it, universally known and loved as the "Old Hundredth" (i.e from the *old* Version of the Psalms by Sternhold and Hopkins), first appeared in the Psalter published in London by John Daye, 1560–1, and in the *Anglo-Genevan Psalter*, printed at Geneva in 1561. Its author is believed to have been William Kethe, a native of Scotland, who was forced to fly during the Marian persecutions, and joined the exiles at Geneva in 1556. The tune is found in the French-Genevan Psalter of 1551 as the tune to Ps. cxxxiv. See Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology*, pp. 43, 44.

A Psalm of praise.

100 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.
2 Serve the LORD with gladness:
Come before his presence with singing.
3 Know ye that the LORD he *is* God:
It is he *that* hath made us, and not we ourselves;
We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

1. Shout unto Jehovah, all the earth, (as in xcviii. 4; lxvi. 1). greeting Him as King. See note on xcviii. 4. Render, as A.V. there and in lxvi. 1, **all the earth,** not *all ye lands*. In the worship of Jehovah mankind is to regain its lost unity.

2. *Serve*] The homage of worship takes the place of the homage of submission (ii. 11); and now the nations can draw near with joy instead of fear.

singing] Cp. **xcv.** 1; xcviii. 4.

3. Know that Jehovah is God:
He it is that made us, and we are his,
His people and the sheep of his pasture.

Learn from the works that He has wrought for Israel that Jehovah is the only true God. Cp. xlvi. 10; Deut. vii. 9. He *made* Israel of old to be a people for Himself (Deut. xxxii. 6, 15; Ps. xcv. 6), and now He has once more made them a nation (Is. lx. 21). In spite of their sins He has not disowned them; they can still with confidence claim His care and guidance.

The A.V. *and not we ourselves* follows the *K'thībh*, which is supported by the LXX, Syr., and Symm. The A.V. marg. and R.V. *we are hi.*, follow the *Q'rē*, which is supported by the Targ., Jer., and Aq.[1] Though the antithesis *he and not we ourselves* gives a good sense, the

[1] The Heb. words for *not* and *to him* (=his) are pronounced identically (*lō*) though differently spelt (לֹא, לוֹ): hence the confusion between the readings *not we* and *to him we=his* (*are*) *we* was easy.

Enter *into* his gates with thanksgiving,
And into his courts with praise:
Be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name.
For the LORD *is* good; his mercy *is* everlasting;
And his truth *endureth* to all generations.

reading *we are his* is far more significant, as adding a fresh thought. Moreover it agrees best with the construction of the verse in the Heb., and it is supported by the parallels in xcv. 7; Is. xliii. 1, cp. xliii. 21, xliv. 2.

4. *thanksgiving*] The parallelism of *praise* in the next line is decidedly in favour of this rendering: still the parallel in xcvi. 8 justifies the alternative rendering of R.V. marg., *a thank offering*.

be thankful] **Give thanks.** Cp. xcvii. 12; and for *bless his name*, cp. xcvi. 2.

5. **For Jehovah is good;**
His lovingkindness (endureth) for ever;
And his faithfulness unto generation after generation.

Israel's fresh experience of the untiring goodness and love and faithfulness of Jehovah is an argument which should win all the nations to His service.

Vv. 4, 5 are based on Jer. xxxiii. 11, cp. Ps. lxxxix. 1. "Give thanks unto Jehovah, for he is good; for his lovingkindness endureth for ever," became a standing liturgical formula after the exile. See note on cvi. 1.

PSALM CI.

In this noble Psalm a ruler addresses Jehovah. He solemnly professes his resolve to banish all baseness from his own heart, and to expel all wrong-doers from his presence, that he may be worthy to receive Jehovah as his guest, and that Jehovah's city may be worthy of its name.

Can we accept the title which attributes the Psalm to David, and find in it the expression of lofty purpose and noble aspiration which animated him when he was contemplating the transfer of the Ark to Zion? At any rate the Psalm is worthy of the man after God's own heart, and that episode in his life offers a natural explanation of its origin.

When the stern punishment of Uzzah's irreverence enforced the lesson of Jehovah's awful holiness, David exclaimed in terror, "How shall the Ark of Jehovah come unto me?" (2 Sam. vi. 9), and the Ark was carried aside into the house of Obed-Edom. But terror was soon exchanged for that earnest longing for Jehovah's Presence in the city of His choice which finds utterance in the cry, "Oh when wilt thou come unto me?", and the Ark was brought up into the city of David. This Psalm then may be regarded as the expression of David's solemn resolution to prepare himself and his city for Jehovah's coming to dwell in

their midst. It is a companion piece to Ps. xv, which describes the character required in those who were to dwell in the immediate Presence of Jehovah, and Ps. xxiv, composed in all probability for the translation of the Ark; and it should further be compared with Ps. xviii. 20 ff., and with "the last words of David" in 2 Sam. xxiii. 1 ff.

No doubt it might have been expected that such a Psalm, if really written by David, would have been included in one of the earlier collections; but it would be rash to assert that this *must* have been the case. Davidic Psalms may have been preserved elsewhere than in these collections until after the Exile; and the compiler of this book may have placed this Psalm here after the group of "accession Psalms" which celebrate the re-establishment of Jehovah's kingdom, in order to suggest how that kingdom might be made a reality for Jerusalem under the sway of a true ruler, some second David, whose kingdom would be based upon the principles of the Divine government (xcix. 4).

The resemblance of some phrases to the language of the Book of Proverbs has been urged as evidence of a much later date. But the resemblances are not such as to prove that the Psalm is dependent on that Book in its present form. Much of the teaching of the Proverbs must have been current orally long before they were collected and reduced to writing.

Various conjectures have been suggested as to the authorship of the Psalm by commentators who think that it must be later than David. It has been attributed to Hezekiah, Josiah, the Maccabaean princes Jonathan (1 Macc. ix. 28 ff.) and Simon (1 Macc. xiv. 14). It has even been regarded (in defiance of the natural meaning of *v.* 6) as the utterance not of an individual ruler, but of the post-exilic community in Jerusalem.

This Psalm has been called "David's mirror for rulers," "the prince's Psalm," "a mirror for magistrates," and the like. It was "beloved by the noblest of Russian princes, Vladimir Monomachos; by the gentlest of English Reformers, Nicholas Ridley" (Stanley). The story is told of Ernest the Pious, Duke of Saxe-Gotha, that he sent an unfaithful minister a copy of this Psalm, and it became a proverbial saying in the country when a minister was guilty of misconduct, "He will soon get the princes' Psalm to read" (Delitzsch). It is naturally appointed as one of the Proper Psalms in the Service for the Day of the Sovereign's Accession.

It consists of two equal divisions: *vv.* 1—4 contain the Psalmist's resolutions for the conduct of his own life: *vv.* 5—8 declare his intention of banishing pride and falsehood and injustice from his court, and surrounding himself with faithful ministers.

A Psalm of David.

101 I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing.

1—4. By purity of purpose and integrity of heart David is resolved to prepare for Jehovah's coming to dwell with him.

1. *I will sing of mercy and judgment*] **Lovingkindness and judge-**

I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when 2
wilt thou come unto me?
I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.
I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: 3
I hate the work of them that turn aside; *it* shall not
cleave to me.
A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know 4
a wicked *person.*

ment are characteristics of the Divine rule (lxxxix. 14), which are to be reflected in the true human ruler (Is. xvi. 5). They are the fundamental principles of right life and conduct, the bond of fellowship between man and God (Hos. ii. 19), and between man and his fellowman (Hos. xii. 6; Mic. vi. 8; Matt. xxiii. 23). If in these opening words the Psalmist is referring to the Divine attributes which are the archetype and model for human conduct, he passes on at once to speak of their imitation and embodiment in his own life and the life of his courtiers.

unto thee &c.] **Unto thee, Jehovah, will I make melody** (lvii. 7).

2. *I will behave myself wisely* &c.] This is a possible rendering: but the words may mean, **I will give heed unto the way of integrity,** deliberately and of set purpose make whole-hearted devotion to God and perfect uprightness towards men the rule of my conduct. Cp. *v.* 6; xv. 2.

O when &c.] The appeal of earnest longing, eager for closer fellowship with God. It recalls David's words in 2 Sam. vi. 9, and may possibly be an allusion to the promise of Ex. xx. 24. Obedience to God's commandments is the condition of such a fellowship (John xiv. 23).

within my house] Even in the privacy of my own palace, I will order my conduct **in the integrity of my heart.** Cp. xviii. 23; lxxviii. 72; Prov. xx. 7. "The recesses of an Eastern palace were often foul with lust, and hid extravagances of caprice and self-indulgence; but this ruler will behave there as one who has Jehovah for a guest" (Maclaren).

3. **I will set no base thing before mine eyes** (R.V.), as an aim to be accomplished, or an example to be imitated. Lit. *matter of belial,* i.e. *worthlessness.* Cp. Deut. xv. 9.

the work of them that turn aside] Or, more probably, **the practice of depravities.**

it *shall not cleave to me*] "If it seized on him unawares, he would shake it off as an accursed thing; Deut. xiii. 17" (Kay).

4. The Psalmist is still speaking of himself. All crookedness and perversity shall be banished from his heart, he will not consciously tolerate evil there. Render the second line, **Evil I will not know.** With 4 *a* and 2 *b* cp. Prov. xi. 20.

froward] Lit. *crooked.* Cp. Prov. xi. 20.

5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off:
Him that hath a high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.
6 Mine eyes *shall be* upon the faithful of the land, that *they* may dwell with me:
He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.
7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house:
He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.
8 I will early destroy all the wicked of the land;
That *I* may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.

5—8. He will not tolerate falsehood and pride and injustice around him, but will seek to fill his court with faithful ministers.

5. *him will I cut off*] Or, destroy, as in *v.* 8 *a*, as in himself evil and moreover an evil counsellor for a king.

a high look] The visible token of a haughty heart within (xviii. 27; Prov. xxi. 4).

6. He is ever on the look out for men of probity and integrity to be his companions and confidential ministers.

he shall serve me] **He shall minister unto me** (R.V.).

7. *he that telleth lies* &c.] **He that speaketh falsehood shall not be established in my presence.**

8. **Morning by morning will I destroy all the wicked of the land; That I may cut off all workers of iniquity from the city of Jehovah.**

Day by day the king will hold his court of justice in the morning (2 Sam. xv. 2; Jer. xxi. 12), that he may purge Jerusalem of evil and make it a holy city, worthy of its high title 'the city of Jehovah.' Cp. xlvi. 4; xlviii. 1, 8; Is. i. 26.

PSALM CII.

The Psalmist supplicates for a speedy hearing (1, 2), for his strength is wasted till he is on the very edge of the grave. He is a solitary mourner, exposed to the ribald mockery of his enemies. His sufferings are a divinely inflicted chastisement (3—11). From *vv.* 13 ff. the cause of his sorrow appears. His people are in exile; Zion is desolate.

But in contrast to his own transitoriness rises the thought of God's eternity, and that eternity is the guarantee for the restoration of Zion. That restoration will be a manifestation of Jehovah's glory which will attract all nations to His service, and evoke the grateful praise of all future generations, when Jerusalem has become the centre of the world's worship (12—22).

Though he cannot forget his own sufferings, and prays that he may be spared a premature death, he finds rest in the thought of the eternity and unchangeableness of Jehovah, Who will not fail His faithful people (23—28).

Who is the speaker? Israel, or an individual Israelite? Many commentators regard the Psalm as the utterance of the nation, and in many respects it seems to go beyond the experience of an individual. But this theory does not do justice to its intensity of personal feeling, and is hard to reconcile with much of its language. It is more natural to regard it as the utterance of an individual, while at the same time it is more than this. The poet is one into whose heart the sorrows of the nation have entered so deeply that he feels them all his own. The strong sense of solidarity which was characteristic of ancient Israel finds expression here. If the nation suffered every member suffered with it. He almost loses his own personality in that of his people. And he speaks not for himself alone, but for the whole body of his fellow-countrymen in exile. Comp. *Introd.* pp. li ff.

We can hardly be wrong in assigning this Psalm to the closing years of the exile in Babylon. Zion is in ruins, but the appointed time for Jehovah to have compassion on her is come (*vv.* 13, 14). The Psalmist looks for the fulfilment of the prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah xl—lxvi, and prays that he may be spared to witness the restoration of Israel with his own eyes (*vv.* 23, 24). Cheyne indeed places it in the time of Nehemiah, on the ground of the resemblance of *v.* 14 to the description of the ruins of Jerusalem in Neh. ii. 11—20, iv. 2. But the Psalm seems to premise that no restoration has yet taken place. The perfects in *vv.* 16, 17, 19 are certainly relative perfects, denoting what will have taken place before events still future have occurred.

The Psalm is full of echoes of Is. xl—lxvi, and of other Psalms, in particular xxii, lxix, lxxix.

The title is unique. It refers to the devotional use of the Ps., not to the occasion of its composition. It is an appropriate *prayer of* (or *for*) *the afflicted, when he fainteth* (lxi. 2), *and poureth out his complaint before Jehovah* (lxii. 8; lv. 2; lxiv. 1; cxlii. 2; 1 Sam. i. 15, 16), finding relief for his overburdened soul in appeal to God.

It is one of the seven 'Penitential Psalms' (vi, xxxii, xxxviii, li, cii, cxxx, cxliii), and is a Proper Psalm for Ash-Wednesday.

A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the LORD.

Hear my prayer, O LORD, 102
And let my cry come unto thee.
Hide not thy face from me 2

1—11. The Psalmist supplicates for a speedy hearing, pleading the extremity of his distress.

1, 2. The Psalmist's prayer is not the less real because it is expressed in familiar phrases from older Psalms. *Hear my prayer, Jehovah*, is from xxxix. 12; *and let my cry for help come unto thee* is suggested by

In the day *when* I am in trouble, incline thine ear
unto me:
In the day *when* I call answer me speedily.
3 For my days are consumed like smoke,
And my bones are burnt as a hearth.
4 My heart is smitten, and withered like grass;
So that I forget to eat my bread.
5 By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave
to my skin.
6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness:
I am like an owl of the desert.

xviii. 6. *Hide not thy face from me* is taken from xxvii. 9, *in the day of my distress* from lix. 16; *incline thine ear unto me* from xxxi. 2; *in the day when I call* from lvi. 9, *answer me speedily* from lxix. 17.

3. *like smoke*] Or, *in smoke*, a natural figure for speedy and complete disappearance. Cp. xxxvii. 20; James iv. 14.

are burnt as a hearth] Rather (cp. P.B.V. and R.V.), **burn as a firebrand**. He compares himself to a sick man whose strength is being consumed by the burning heat of fever. Cp. xxii. 15; Jer. xx. 9.

4. My heart is smitten like grass, and withered;
Yea, I forget to eat my bread.

His heart, the centre of vital force and vigour, is dried up like a plant struck by the fierce heat of the sun and withered (cxxi. 6; Hos. ix. 16). Sorrow and sickness have deprived him of all appetite for food. Cp. 1 Sam. i. 7, 8; Job xxxiii. 20.

5. In the A.V. is retained, the verse will describe the state of emaciation to which he has been reduced by continued sorrow. Cp. Lam. iv. 8. But though the cognate Arabic word means *skin*, it is doubtful whether the Heb. word *basār* can bear this sense. Usage requires the rendering of R.V., 'my bones cleave to my flesh,' which means apparently that his limbs are swollen and stiff. The phrase seems to be borrowed from Job xix. 20, "my bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh," where Job describes his limbs as partly emaciated, partly abnormally swollen, and stiff with disease. The curious rendering of the P.B.V. "*my bones* [Coverdale, *bone*] will scarce cleave to my flesh," comes from the Zurich Version:—"Vor geschrey mines seufftzens mag mein gebeyn kum an meinem fleysch hangen."

6. He compares himself to solitude-loving birds which haunt desolate places and ruins, uttering weird and mournful cries. Cp. Is. xxxiv. 11; Zeph. ii. 14 (A.V. *cormorant*). Render the second line, **I am become as an owl in desolate places**. The owl is called by the Arabs "mother of ruins," and "in the tombs or on the ruins, among the desolate heaps which mark the sites of ancient Judah, on the sandy mounds of Beersheba, or on the spray-beaten fragments of Tyre, his low wailing note is sure to be heard at sunset." Tristram's *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 194.

I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop. 7
Mine enemies reproach me all the day; 8
And they that are mad against me are sworn against me.
For I have eaten ashes like bread, 9
And mingled my drink with weeping,
Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: 10
For thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.
My days *are* like a shadow that declineth; 11
And I am withered like grass.

But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; 12

7. I keep vigil, and am become
Like a solitary bird upon the housetop.

His nights are sleepless: he spends them like "the moping owl" in mournful complaints. Some solitary, nocturnal bird is clearly meant, perhaps some kind of owl, or according to Tristram (*Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 202), the Blue Thrush. Cp. Verg. *Aen.* iv. 462,

"Solaque culminibus ferali carmine bubo
Visa queri, et longas in fletum ducere voces."

For *am become* we should perhaps read *and moan* (ואהיה for ואהגה). Cp. Is. lix. 11.

8. His enemies aggravate his sufferings by mocking him as one forsaken by God (xlii. 10; xliv. 13).

are sworn against me] Rather as R.V., do curse by me; using my name in formulas of execration, 'God make thee like yonder miserable wretch.' Cp. Is. lxv. 15; Jer. xxix. 22.

9. They may well do so; for what can be more wretched than his plight? Mourning and tears are as it were his food and drink. Cp. xlii. 3; lxxx. 5. For ashes as the symbol of mourning, cp. Job ii. 8; Lam. iii. 16; Ezek. xxvii. 30.

10. This suffering is the punishment of sin. The storm of God's wrath has swept Israel away from its own land, and flung it down helpless in the land of exile. *Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down* (A.V.) has been taken to mean that the bitterness of Israel's present humiliation is intensified by the recollection of its past exaltation (cp. Lam. ii. 1), but it suits the context better to render For thou hast taken me up and flung me away, a metaphor from a hurricane. Cp. Job xxvii. 21; xxx. 22; Is. lxiv. 6. The same word is used of the banishment of Israel in Jer. vii. 15, &c.

11. *like a shadow that declineth*] Or, like a shadow stretched out (Jer. vi. 4) towards evening, and about to disappear altogether as the sun sinks below the horizon.

I am withered like grass] Rather, I am withering away like grass. The common emblem for frail and transitory mortality. Cp. Is. xl. 7; James i. 11.

12—22. From the thought of his own frailty and transitoriness he

And thy remembrance unto all generations.
13 Thou shalt arise, *and* have mercy upon Zion:
For the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.
14 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones,
And favour the dust thereof.
15 So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD,
And all the kings of the earth thy glory.
16 When the LORD shall build up Zion,
He shall appear in his glory.

turns to the eternal sovereignty of Jehovah, which is the sure pledge for Zion's restoration.

12. But thou, Jehovah, shalt sit enthroned for ever;
And thy memorial shall be for generation after generation.

The verse is taken from Lam. v. 19, with the substitution of *memorial* for *throne*. The thought in which the Psalmist takes refuge is not merely Jehovah's eternity ('shalt abide'), but Jehovah's eternal sovereignty (ix. 7). The NAME which is His memorial to one generation after another (Ex. iii. 15) is the pledge and expression of that sovereign rule. "I will be that I will be," ever revealing Myself as the Living God, working out My plan in the history of the world. Such as He revealed Himself to be in the Exodus, He must continue to be for all time.

13. Since He thus rules, He must have compassion on Zion in accordance with His promise, **for it is time to have pity on her, yea the set time is come.** Cp. Is. xxx. 18; xlix. 13; Jer. xxx. 18; xxxi. 20; Zech. i. 12. The appointed time for the end of the exile was now at hand. Cp. Jer. xxix. 10; Is. xl. 2; Hab. ii. 3.

14. For thy servants have affection for her stones,
And for her dust are they moved with pity.

Another argument to move Jehovah's compassion. His servants look with yearning love towards Zion in its ruin. Even the broken stones and scattered heaps of rubbish which are all that remain of it are very dear to them. The language resembles that of Sanballat's contemptuous taunt: "Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish?" Heb. *dust*, Neh. iv. 2; cp. *v.* 10, "there is much rubbish," Heb. *dust*.

15. *So the* **nations** &c.] The restoration of Zion will be the prelude to the conversion of the world. God's manifestation of His power and His faithfulness towards His people will win the homage of all the nations. This is a fundamental thought in Is. xl—lxvi. See especially lix. 19; lx. 3.

16, 17. When Jehovah hath built up Zion,
Hath appeared in his glory,
Hath turned to the prayer of the destitute,
And not despised their prayer.

These verses are in close connexion with *v.* 15. The nations will pay homage to Jehovah, when He has manifested His glory in the redemp-

He will regard the prayer of the destitute, 17
And not despise their prayer.
This shall be written for the generation to come: 18
And the people which *shall be* created shall praise the LORD.
For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; 19
From heaven did the LORD behold the earth;
To hear the groaning of the prisoner; 20
To loose those that are appointed to death;
To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, 21
And his praise in Jerusalem;
When the people are gathered together, 22
And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

tion of His people. *The destitute* or *forlorn* is Israel in exile. With *v.* 17 generally cp. xxii. 24; lxix. 33.

18. The good news of Jehovah's mercy shall be recorded as the theme for the grateful praises of future generations. Cp. Jer. xxx. 2. The restoration of Israel will be nothing less than a new creation. Cp. Is. xliii. 7, 21; Ps. xxii. 31.

shall praise the LORD] Heb. Jah. Here first in the Psalter we have the combination of words which forms the characteristic call to worship in the post-exilic Psalms, *Hallelujah*, 'Praise ye Jah.'

19. Because *he hath looked down*...hath beheld] In answer to the prayer of Is. lxiii. 15. Cp. also Deut. xxvi. 15; Ps. xiv. 2; xxxiii. 13. This verse is related to *v.* 18 as *vv.* 16, 17 are to *v.* 15. The perfect tense denotes what will lie in the past when the time referred to in *v.* 18 is reached. Jehovah had not yet 'looked down' upon His people when the Psalmist was writing; this is clear from *v.* 13; but He will assuredly do so, and His renewed regard will be the occasion and theme for their thanksgiving.

20. An echo of the prayer in lxxix. 11. Cp. Is. xlii. 7; lxi. 1. Israel in exile is compared to a condemned captive languishing in prison, and doomed to perish if Jehovah does not speedily interpose.

the groaning of the prisoner] R.V. the sighing of the prisoner, as in lxxix. 11.

those that are appointed to death] Lit. *the sons of death*. Cp. 1 Sam. xx. 31 (marg.). The word for *death* is a form found only here and in Ps. lxxix. 11.

21. *To declare*] R.V. That men may declare: either the returned exiles or the assembled nations, or in the widest sense, both together.

22. *the people*] R.V. the peoples. Israel does not return alone: its restoration will be the signal for that gathering of the nations to worship Jehovah in Zion, which ancient prophecy had foretold (Is. ii. 2 ff. = Mic. iv. 1 ff.), and which recent prophecy had uncompromisingly reaffirmed in the teeth of appearances (Is. lx. 3 ff.). Cp. Ps. xxii. 27.

23 He weakened my strength in the way;
He shortened my days.
24 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days:
Thy years *are* throughout all generations.
25 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth:
And the heavens *are* the work of thy hands.
26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure:
Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment;
As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:

But did not the event, it may be asked, fall far short of the anticipations of prophet and Psalmist? They looked for a triumphant return of Israel and a visible manifestation of Jehovah's glory, to be followed immediately by the submission of the nations. As a matter of fact the return was an insignificant event, and no startling results immediately followed it. The answer is twofold. The spiritual significance of the Return for the history of the world could not be exaggerated; and prophecy constantly combines in one view the nearer and the remoter future, depicting the eventual result, without indicating the steps by which it is to be reached.

23—28. From the contemplation of the glorious future the Psalmist returns to the present, and takes up the thought of *v.* 11.

23, 24. He hath brought down my strength in the way;
He hath shortened my days.
I will say, O my God &c.

Life has been a toilsome journey for him: he is prematurely old: but he deprecates an untimely death. He would fain survive to see with his own eyes the glory which he knows is to be revealed. Cp. lxxxix. 47, note. The contrast of God's eternal years adds pathos to the thought of the brevity of his own life, yet at the same time that eternity is the guarantee for His faithfulness to His people.

My strength is the traditional reading (*Q'rē*), which is supported by most of the Versions. The written text (*K'thībh*) has *his strength*, which must be rendered, *He hath afflicted* me with *his strength*; or, *His strength hath brought* me *down*. But the *Q'rē* gives a better sense.

24. *I will say* introduces the prayer which follows with additional emphasis. Cp. Job x. 2.

in the midst of my days] Cp. lv. 23; Is. xxxviii. 10.

thy years &c.] The eternity of God is contrasted with the transitoriness of man as in *vv.* 12, 11.

26. Compared with man's brief span of life the natural world is an emblem of permanence; compared with God's eternity, it is seen to be transitory. He existed from all eternity before it, and called it into being: He will exist unchanged when it has passed away.

they shall be changed] Or, pass away. The Psalmist's thought here is

But thou *art* the same,
And thy years shall have no end.
The children of thy servants shall continue,
And their seed shall be established before thee.

rather of the transitoriness of heaven and earth contrasted with the eternity of God than of the new heavens and new earth, Is. lxv. 17; lxvi. 22.

27. *thou* art *the same*] Lit., as in Deut. xxxii. 39; Is. xli. 4; xliii. 10, 13; xlvi. 4; xlviii. 12, Thou art He, an emphatic assertion of the personality of Jehovah, which is in its very nature unchanging.

vv. 25–27 are quoted in Heb. i. 10—12, from the LXX, and applied to Christ. The Psalmist is addressing Jehovah, Whom he expects to manifest Himself as the Redeemer of Israel. As the mystery of the Godhead was disclosed in the progress of revelation, it was seen that the words might be applied with equal right to the Eternal Word through Whom all things were made, and Who was manifested for the redemption of the world.

28. The eternity of God is the pledge for the permanence of His people. Even if the Psalmist and his contemporaries do not live to see the restoration of Israel, their descendants will have part in it. The verse is an echo of Is. lxv. 9; lxvi. 22: cp. Ps. lxix. 35, 36.

shall continue] Lit. shall dwell, in the land once more (Is. lxv. 9; Ps. lxix. 36).

before thee] Or, in thy presence. 'Banish them from my presence' was the sentence pronounced upon Judah as upon Israel (Jer. vii. 15; xv. 1, &c.); but they shall be readmitted to Jehovah's presence and restored to His favour. The prophecy of Jer. xxx. 20 will be fulfilled.

PSALM CIII.

The hope of the preceding Psalm (*v.* 13) has been realised. Sorrow has been turned into joy. God has forgiven the sins of His people and taken them back into His favour. Praise and thanksgiving take the place of complaint and supplication.

The Psalm bears the name of David in the title, but it is impossible to suppose that it was written by him. The Aramaic colouring of the language[1], the allusions to Job, Jeremiah, and the later chapters of Isaiah, and the general style and matter of the Psalm, combine to make it certain that it belongs to a far later date. If Ps. cii may be assigned

[1] In *vv.* 3—5 peculiar forms of the pronominal suffix of 2nd pers. sing. fem. *ēkī*, and plur. *ayĕkī* are used. They are found again in cxvi. 7, 19; cxxxv. 9; cxxxvii. 6; and elsewhere only in 2 Kings iv. 2 ff., Jer. xi. 15 (?); Cant. ii. 13 (?). They resemble the Aramaic form, and appear to have been in use in the dialect of North Israel, and to have been employed occasionally after the Exile under the influence of Aramaic (cp. the Aramaic form of suffix for 3rd pers. masc. in cxvi. 12) in poetry as rhythmically euphonious forms. See Gesen.-Kautzsch *Gram.* § 91, 1. R. 2; 2 R. 2.

to the close of the Exile, Ps. ciii may with equal probability be placed in the early years of the Return. It was written while the sense of the nation's forgiveness, of which that deliverance was the proof, was still fresh and vivid.

It is evident that *vv.* 10 ff. speak of Jehovah's mercies to the nation, and some commentators think that the speaker in *vv.* 1—5 also is the personified nation. But the change from the singular in *vv.* 1—5 to the plural in *vv.* 6 ff. is left unexplained by this theory. Here, as in Ps. cii, it is more natural to suppose that the Psalmist, when he uses the first person singular, is really speaking for himself, and using words which any other pious Israelite might appropriate for the expression of his own personal feelings.

But just as in Ps. cii national sorrows and sufferings have so deeply entered into the Psalmist's heart that he speaks of them as his own, so here he so completely identifies himself with the destinies of the nation that its joys are his own, and he gives thanks for national deliverance and national mercies as though they had been vouchsafed to him individually.

The Psalm falls into five approximately equal stanzas, the first and last forming the introduction and conclusion, and the other three the main body of the Psalm.

i. The Psalmist summons his soul and all his faculties to praise Jehovah for pardon, redemption, and bountiful provision for every need (1—5).

ii. Jehovah's revelation of Himself to Moses has been verified afresh in His recent treatment of Israel (6—10). His pardoning mercy knows no limits; His fatherly love shews the most tender consideration (11—14). Man may be frail and transitory, but those who fear Jehovah can rest in the assurance of His eternal faithfulness to their posterity (15—18).

iii. The thought of the universality of Jehovah's kingdom naturally introduces the call to all creation to join in an universal chorus of praises (19—22).

The Psalm is one of singular beauty. Its tenderness, its trustfulness, its hopefulness, anticipate the spirit of the N.T. It does not contain one jarring note, and it furnishes fit language of thanksgiving for the greater blessings of a more marvellous redemption than that of Israel from Babylon.

A Psalm of David.

103 Bless the LORD, O my soul:
And all that is within me, *bless* his holy name.

1—5. The Psalmist exhorts himself to praise God for His manifold mercies.

1. *My soul* is the Psalmist's self or personality: *all that is within me* are the various organs of the body, which were regarded by the Hebrews as the seat of thought will and emotion. The Psalmist summons all the faculties and powers of his being to unite in the praise of Jehovah.

his holy name] Cp. xxxiii. 21; cv. 3; cvi. 47; cxlv. 21. Jehovah's

Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And forget not all his benefits:
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; 3
Who healeth all thy diseases;
Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; 4
Who crowneth thee *with* lovingkindness and tender mercies;
Who satisfieth thy mouth with good *things*; 5
So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

holiness, which must needs be vindicated in the punishment of Israel's sin, was again demonstrated to be deliverance which proved His faithfulness to His covenant. Cp. Ezek. xxxix. 7, 25.

2. *forget not*] "Beware lest thou forget" is the often repeated warning of Deuteronomy (vi. 12; viii. 11; &c.). "Si oblivisceris tacebis" is St Augustine's comment.

3. The Psalmist may have had in mind Ex. xv. 26, "I am Jehovah that healeth thee"; and Deut. xxix. 22, where the somewhat rare word for 'diseases' is used of the judgements with which the land is to be punished for Israel's sins. The word need not be limited to bodily sickness, but may include all suffering. The removal of the punishment of sin is the proof of its forgiveness. Cp. lxxxv. 1—3; cxlvii. 3.

4. *from destruction*] So the LXX. ἐκ φθορᾶς. But *shachath* more probably means *the pit* i.e. *the grave*. See note on xvi. 10. The restoration from Babylon was a renewal of the nation's life, in which each member of it had a personal share.

crowneth] Cp. viii. 5; and for a similar metaphor, Prov. iii. 3.

5. *thy mouth*] So the A.V. for the same word in xxxii. 9, and the R.V. has retained the rendering here, though it rests on no sure basis. The Ancient Versions are at fault. The LXX gives *thy desire*; the Targ. *the days of thine old age*; the Syr. *thy body*; Aq. and Jer. *thy adornment*. The latter is the regular meaning of the word; and it has been suggested that, like *glory* in xvi. 9, it may mean *soul*. But this is improbable, as the soul itself is addressed; and it seems better to suppose that the verb has an unusual construction (but cp. cxlv. 16), and to render:

Who adorneth thee to the full with goodliness;
(So that) thy youth is renewed like an eagle.

In Israel's resurrection from the grave of exile each Israelite is as it were endowed with a fresh accession of youthful vigour. Cp. Is. xl. 31, where, as here, the point of comparison is the strength of the eagle, which might well seem to enjoy perpetual youth. There is no need to suppose an allusion to the fable that the eagle periodically renewed its strength by soaring sunwards and then plunging into the sea. Coverdale's paraphrase in the P.B.V., "making thee young and lusty as an eagle," gives the sense rightly.

6 The LORD executeth righteousness
And judgment for all that are oppressed.
7 He made known his ways unto Moses,
His acts unto the children of Israel.
8 The LORD *is* merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.
9 He will not always chide:
Neither will he keep *his anger* for ever.
10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins;
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
11 For as the heaven is high above the earth,
So great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

6—10. Jehovah's gracious dealings with men illustrated from the experience of Israel.

6. Jehovah executeth righteous acts,
And judgements for all that are oppressed.

Cp. cxlvi. 7; Judg. v. 11. This general truth has been verified afresh in the deliverance from Babylon.

7, 8. *v.* 7*a* is a reminiscence of Moses' prayer, "make known to me, I pray, thy ways" (Ex. xxxiii. 13), and *v.* 8 is quoted from the revelation of Jehovah's character which was the answer to that prayer (Ex. xxxiv. 6). It is often referred to, e.g. lxxxvi. 15; cxlv. 8; Joel ii. 13; Neh. ix. 17; &c. God's 'ways' and 'doings' here mean His methods of dealing with men, and this quotation gives a summary of them.

Render *v.* 8,

Jehovah is full of compassion and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness.

9. Cp. Is. lvii. 16; Jer. iii. 12.

chide] Or, contend. He is slow to anger, yet the time comes when He must as it were bring a suit against His people, and convict them of their sin (Is. iii. 13; Mic. vi. 2; Jer. ii. 9), and shew His indignation by punishing them for it; but even then His anger does not last for ever.

10. God has punished Israel less than their iniquities deserved. Cp. Ezr. ix. 13.

11—14. The greatness and tenderness of Jehovah's forgiving love.

11. Cp. xxxvi. 5; lvii. 10; Is. lv. 9.

so *great is*] so mighty hath been. The change of a letter would give the sense, *so high hath been*; but it is unnecessary. Cp. cxvii. 2. The perfect tense in *vv.* 10—12 refers to Israel's recent experience.

them that fear him] True Israelites are those who can claim the promise. Note the triple repetition of the words, which recur in *vv.* 13. 17.

As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.
Like as a father pitieth *his* children,
So the LORD pitieth them that fear him.
For he knoweth our frame;
He remembereth that we *are* dust.
As for man, his days *are* as grass:
As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.
For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone;
And the place thereof shall know it no more.
But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him,
And his righteousness unto children's children;
To such as keep his covenant,
And to those that remember his commandments to do them.

12. For similar language to denote the completeness of the removal of sin by pardoning grace cp. Is. xxxviii. 17; Mic. vii. 19.

13. Cp. xxvii. 10; Is. xlix. 15; Luke xv. 20.

pitieth] Hath compassion on. The A.V. misses the connexion with "full of compassion" in *v.* 8.

14. Here as often the frailty of man is pleaded as a motive for mercy. Cp. lxxviii. 39; lxxxix. 47.

our frame] Lit. *our formation*; what we are made of. The verse is an allusion to Gen. ii. 7, "The LORD God *formed* man of the *dust* of the ground."

15—18. Man passes away, but God's mercy endures for ever.

15. As for *man*] Mortal man: the Heb. *'enōsh* denotes man in his weakness and frailty (xc. 3). For the figure of the grass cp. xc. 5, 6; Is. li. 12; for that of the flower, Job xiv. 2; for both, Is. xl. 6 ff.

16. The verse may refer to the withering of the flower (A.V.), but it is more poetical to understand it metaphorically of the disappearance of the man.

For a wind passeth over him, and he is not,
And his place shall know him no more.

"The east wind, blowing over the desert in summer, is dry and parching, and withers up all vegetation." Tristram, *Nat. Hist.* p. 34. Cp. Hos. xiii. 15. The second line is from Job vii. 10; cp. viii. 18, xx. 9.

17. Men may pass away, but Jehovah's lovingkindness and righteousness, i.e. His covenant faithfulness, endure. The eternity of God is the rock upon which faith can repose in view of the mutability of man. Cp. xc. 1; cii. 12, 27; Is. xl. 8. Those who fear Him can securely commit their posterity to His care. Cp. cii. 28. Both the assurance, and the condition introduced by *v.* 18, rest upon Ex. xx. 6; Deut. vii. 9.

18. *his commandments*] R.V. his precepts.

19 The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens;
And his kingdom ruleth over all.
20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels,
That excel in strength, that do his commandments,
Hearkening unto the voice of his word.
21 Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts;
Ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.
22 Bless the LORD, all his works
In all places of his dominion:
Bless the LORD, O my soul.

19—22. The thought of Jehovah's supreme and universal sovereignty introduces a concluding call to the whole universe to unite in His praises.

19. **Jehovah hath established his throne in heaven**, the sphere of all that is sublime, unchanging, eternal (xi. 4; xciii. 2).

his kingdom &c.] Cp. 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12. Cp. the watchword of other Psalms of the Return, "Jehovah hath proclaimed himself King" (xciii. 1; xcvi. 10; xcvii. 1; xcix. 1).

20. **Bless Jehovah, ye angels of his;**
Ye mighty in strength, that do his word,
Hearkening unto the voice of his word.

Heavenly beings are most capable of praising the heavenly King. For the address to the angels cp. xxix. 1; cxlviii. 2. They are called *mighty in strength* as God's warriors; cp. Joel iii. 11. The "blessed obedience" of the angels is an example for man.

21. By Jehovah's *hosts* and *ministers* may be meant the innumerable multitudes of celestial beings of lower rank, subordinated to the celestial hierarchy spoken of in *v.* 20 (Dan. vii. 10; Heb. i. 14); or perhaps "the host of heaven," the stars, which are closely connected with angels in the O.T. (Job xxxviii. 7), and all the powers of Nature, which subserve Jehovah's purposes (civ. 4; cxlviii. 2, 3).

22. **Bless Jehovah, all ye his works,**
In all places of his dominion:
Bless Jehovah, O my soul.

The 'Song of the Three Children' is a noble expansion of this theme. In the last line the Psalmist returns to the point from which he started. In creation's universal hymn of praise he would fain bear his part, however humble.

PSALM CIV.

This glorious Psalm is conspicuous alike for its poetic beauty and for its religious significance. It is a companion piece to Ps. ciii, and was probably written by the same poet. Both of them begin and end with

the same call to adoring praise, *Bless Jehovah, O my soul.* In Ps. ciii that call is based upon the consideration of God's mercy exhibited in His recent deliverance of Israel, in Ps. civ upon the contemplation of His power, wisdom, and goodness manifested in the creation and maintenance of the world. History and Nature render their concurrent testimony.

The author of this Psalm has been called "the Wordsworth of the ancients, penetrated with a love for nature, and gifted with the insight that springs from love" (Aglen). Undoubtedly he was an enthusiastic lover of Nature, but it was not for its own sake merely that he loved it. It was to him "a book which heavenly truth imparts."

> "The earth
> And common face of nature spake to him
> Rememberable things."

For him the invisible attributes of God, His everlasting power and divinity, were daily rendered visible to human reason in the works of creation (Rom. i. 20).

The general arrangement of the poem is suggested by the story of creation in Gen. i, but the treatment of the subject is free and original. Often we are reminded of the creation-pictures in Job xxxviii—xli, with which the author must have been familiar. Sometimes he draws a picture of the process of creation, but for the most part it is the present order and continuous maintenance of the universe by the beneficent will of the Creator which kindles his devout enthusiasm. God did not make the world and leave it to itself. It depends absolutely upon His will for the continuance of its existence. It is He who "giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts xvii. 25). And at the end the poet looks forward to the banishment of evil, and the restoration of the harmony of creation, "that God may be all in all."

The following analysis may help to indicate the plan of the Psalm.

Creation is a revelation of the incomparable majesty of God. The elemental forces of Nature are an expression of His Almighty power (1—4). He formed the earth and separated the land and sea (5—9); and while the great mass of waters is thus confined in its appointed place, provision is made for the needs of beast and bird by spring and stream (10—12). He sends rain to fertilise the earth, and make it produce food for man and beast (13—15); He plants it with stately trees, which are the home of the birds, and peoples the mountains and rocks with His creatures (16—18). Moon and sun mark times and seasons, day and night (19—23). Then, after an exclamation of adoring wonder, the poet points to the sea with its manifold marvels (24—26), and emphasises the perpetual dependence of every living thing on God not only for sustenance but for life (27—30). Finally with a glance at the awful power of Him Who can destroy as easily as He can create, the Psalmist prays that His works may never cease to please Him and reveal His glory. As long as he lives he will sing praise to God. May all that disturbs the harmony of creation be banished from the earth (31—35).

The choice of this Psalm as a Proper Psalm for Whitsunday was probably due to the reference it contains to the spirit of God as the

source of life; it has moreover a singular fitness for the great festival which in this country falls at the time when spring has once more "renewed the face of the ground."

104 Bless the LORD, O my soul.
O LORD my God, thou art very great;
Thou art clothed with honour and majesty.
2 Who coverest *thyself with* light as *with* a garment:
Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:
3 Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters:
Who maketh the clouds his chariot:
Who walketh upon the wings of the wind:

1—4. The greatness and majesty of Jehovah exhibited in creation.

1. The verbs (not adjectives or participles as in xcvi. 4) of the Heb. express an act rather than a state: *thou hast made thyself very great... thou hast clothed thyself* &c. It is not, so to speak, God's eternal and immutable greatness which the poet celebrates, but the revelation of His greatness, the assumption, as it were, of a new robe of imperial majesty in the creation of the world. *Honour* and *majesty* are the attributes of a king. Cp. xcvi. 6; xxi. 5; viii. 1. For the phrase of line 3 cp. Job xl. 10; Ps. xciii. 1.

2. Light, the first created element, is as it were God's robe, revealing while it conceals Him. Nothing can serve better as the expression of His Nature (1 John i. 5 1 Tim. vi. 16). Light is universally diffused; it is the condition of life, the source of gladness, the emblem of purity.

who stretchest out &c.] Cp. Is. xl. 22. The canopy of the sky is compared to a tent-curtain, stretched out over the earth. By His simple fiat God spread out these heavens as easily as a man might pitch his tent. Their vastness is a symbol of the majesty of the King Who dwells in His royal pavilion, Whom yet "heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain."

Observe the present participles, *covering thyself, stretching out.* The original act of creation is regarded as continued into the present in the maintenance of the universe.

3. By a bold paradox the Creator is described as *laying the beams of* **his upper chambers** *in the waters.* On the mysterious reservoir of waters, which was imagined by the ancient Hebrews to exist above the 'firmament' (Gen. i. 7; Ps. xxix. 3; cxlviii. 4), He constructs His secret dwelling, as a man builds "upper chambers" on the roof of his house for air and privacy. The line is an echo of Amos ix. 6, "he that buildeth his upper chambers in the heavens."

who maketh the clouds &c.] The stormcloud and the tempest are the symbols of His Advent. Cp. xviii. 10; Is. xix. 1; Dan. vii. 13; Matt. xxiv. 30.

Who maketh his angels spirits;
His ministers a flaming fire:

4. The A.V. follows the LXX, which is quoted in Heb. i. 7, with the change of *a flaming fire* into *a flame of fire*. The Greek like the Hebrew is ambiguous, for the word for *angels* may mean simply *messengers*, and that for *spirits* may mean simply *winds*. But it is clear that the spiritual nature of angels is not in question here, and that the right rendering is *winds*. The construction of the whole verse has however been the subject of much discussion.

(1) If the construction of the A.V. and LXX is retained, and it is the most natural construction of the Heb. words, we may render,

Who maketh his angels winds,
His ministers a flaming fire,

and the meaning will be that as Jehovah reveals Himself in the works of creation, so He arrays the spiritual agents and ministers who surround Him (ciii. 20, 21) with the form of physical phenomena, the wind and the lightning. "Where men at first see only material objects and forms of nature there God is present, fulfilling His will through His servants under the forms of elemental action" (Bp Westcott on Heb. i. 7). The Targ., adopting the same construction, paraphrases, "Who makes his messengers swift as winds, his ministers strong as fire," but this explanation misses the connexion with the preceding verses.

(2) Most commentators however think that the context demands the rendering,

Who maketh winds his messengers,
Flaming fire his ministers.

As the clouds are Jehovah's chariot, so winds and lightnings are His messengers and servants. The great forces of Nature are His agents, employed by Him to do His bidding. Cp. cxlviii. 8. But this rendering is not free from objection on grammatical grounds. The order of the words is decidedly against it.

(3) A third possible rendering is,

Who maketh his messengers of winds,
His ministers of flaming fire.

Jehovah forms His messengers and ministers out of winds and lightnings; He uses these natural agents for the execution of His purposes. This rendering expresses the same sense as (2), though somewhat less directly, and is free from its grammatical difficulty.

The first rendering however deserves more consideration than it has generally received. It is the most natural rendering, and its connexion with the context, if less obvious than that of (2) and (3), is still real. The general purport of these verses is not to shew "how the various natural agents are appropriated to different uses by the Creator," but how the Creator is revealed in and through the works of Creation. And as Jehovah is represented in *vv.* 20, 21 of Ps. ciii, which is so closely related to this Ps., as environed by hosts of angels and ministers, it is suitable to shew here how these angels and ministers find expression in physical phenomena.

On the grammatical question see Driver's *Hebrew Tenses*, § 195, *Obs.*

5 *Who* laid the foundations of the earth,
That it should not be removed for ever.
6 Thou coveredst it *with* the deep as *with* a garment:
The waters stood above the mountains.
7 At thy rebuke they fled;
At the voice of thy thunder they hasted away.
8 They go up *by* the mountains; they go down *by* the valleys
Unto the place which thou hast founded for them.
9 Thou hast set a bound *that* they may not pass over;
That they turn not again to cover the earth.

5—9. The formation of the earth, and the separation of land and water: the work of the third day, Gen. i. 9, 10; cp. Job xxxviii. 8—11.

5. **He founded the earth on its bases,**
That it should not be moved for ever.

The earth is compared to a building erected upon solid foundations. Cp. Job xxxviii. 6; Prov. viii. 29.

6. This verse does not refer to the Flood, though its language may be borrowed from the account of the Flood (Gen. vii. 19, 20; and cp. *v.* 9 with Gen. ix. 11, 15), but to the primitive condition of the earth. It is regarded as already moulded into hill and valley, but enveloped with the 'abyss' of waters (Gen. i. 2), by which even the highest mountains are covered. Cp. Milton, *Par. Lost*, vii. 278,

"Over all the face of earth
Main ocean flowed."

The tense of the original is a graphic 'imperfect.' "The waters were standing above the mountains."

7, 8. The graphic imperfects are continued, picturing the process of the separation of land and water.

7. **At thy rebuke they flee,**
At the voice of thy thunder they haste away,
8. **(The mountains rise, the vales sink down,)**
Unto the place which thou hadst founded for them.

The 'rebuke' of God is His command, uttered as it were with a voice of thunder (xviii. 15; Is. l. 2). It is best to follow the marg. of A.V. and R.V. in taking *v.* 8*a* as a parenthesis, describing the result of this Divine command. Mountains and valleys appear (Gen. i. 9) as the waters retire to the place appointed for them. Cp. Ov. *Metam.* i. 344 f.

"Flumina subsidunt, colles exire videntur,
Surgit humus, crescunt loca, decrescentibus undis."

See also Milton, *Par. Lost*, vii. 285 ff.

The rendering of the A.V. and R.V., which is also grammatically possible, appears to describe the commotion of the waters as the great deep breaks up and they seek their appointed place.

9. The reference is not to the Flood, but to the original separation of land and water confirmed after the Flood (Gen. ix. 9 ff.). Cp. Job xxxviii. 10, 11; Prov. viii. 29.

He sendeth the springs into the valleys, 10
Which run among the hills.
They give drink to every beast of the field: 11
The wild asses quench their thirst.
By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habita- 12
tion,
Which sing among the branches.
He watereth the hills from his chambers: 13
The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.
He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, 14
And herb for the service of man:

10—18 While He confines the great mass of waters to its appointed place, He fertilises the land by springs and rain, and makes bountiful provision for the wants of men and animals.

10. **Who sendeth forth springs into the valleys;**
They run among the mountains.

Cp. the description of Palestine in Deut. viii. 7.

11. *every beast of the field*] Wild animals, as distinguished from domesticated animals, the 'cattle' of *v.* 14.

the wild asses] Mentioned particularly as one of the most striking and beautiful of wild animals. See Davidson's note on Job xxxix. 7, a passage which may have been in the Psalmist's mind, for he was evidently familiar with Job. Jeremiah (xiv. 6) draws a graphic picture of the sufferings of the wild ass in a drought.

quench] Lit. *break*. Cp. frangere sitim.

12. **Beside them dwell the birds of the heaven;**
From among the leafage they utter their song.

Beside the springs and streams grow the trees which are the home of the birds, whose song of praise to their Maker ever rises from their branches.

13. **Who giveth the mountains drink from his upper chambers.**

Palestine was "a land of mountains and valleys, drinking water of the rain of heaven" (Deut. xi. 11). It is not inaccessible mountain tops which the poet is thinking of, so much as the upland corn fields (lxxii. 16), watered by the rain which God sends down from His "upper chambers" (*v.* 3), as the valleys are watered by streams.

the fruit of thy works] Generally explained to mean the rain, as a product of the clouds which God has made. But this is harsh: it is much more natural to take the phrase in the simple sense of "fruit produced by God's manifold operations." Earth is fertilised by the rain and springs, and rejoices in its abundant produce. The thought is further developed in *vv.* 14—18.

14. *herb*] Cp. Gen. i. 11, 12, 29 30; iii. 18; ix. 3. The term includes all vegetable products.

for the service of man] The use of the word in *v.* 23 and elsewhere is in favour of the rendering of R.V. marg., *for the labour of man*:—

That *he* may bring forth food out of the earth;
15 And wine *that* maketh glad the heart of man,
And oil to make *his* face to shine,
And bread *which* strengtheneth man's heart.
16 The trees of the LORD are full *of sap;*
The cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted;
17 Where the birds make their nests:
As for the stork, the fir trees *are* her house.
18 The high hills *are* a refuge for the wild goats;
And the rocks for the conies.
19 He appointed the moon for seasons:

God makes the soil respond to man's tillage with abundant produce. But the Heb. word seems to be capable of the same extension of meaning as 'service' and this sense fits the parallelism and the context best.

14 *b*, 15. The division of the verses obscures the parallelism. Render:

That he may bring forth bread out of the earth,
And that wine may gladden the heart of man:
That he may make his face to shine with oil,
And that bread may sustain man's heart.

Corn, wine and oil were the chief products of Palestine (Deut. xii. 17). God provides for man's enjoyment as well as for his sustenance. Cp. for the language Judg. ix. 13: Eccl. x. 19.

16. The trees of Jehovah are not merely stately and majestic trees, but as the next line shews, *those which He has planted*, the natural growth of the primeval forest, in contrast to trees planted by the hand of man. Cp. Num. xxiv. 6. They are satisfied (cp. 13 *b*) with the rain from heaven.

17. *the stork*] *Chăsīdāh*, the Heb. name for the stork, is connected with *chĕsĕd*, "lovingkindness, and it was so called from its affection for its young, a trait often noticed by Greek and Latin writers. Thus it is called πτηνῶν εὐσεβέστατον ζῴων by Babrius (Fab. 13), and 'avis pia' or 'pietaticultrix' (Petron. 55. 6). Though in Western Europe the stork commonly builds its nest on houses, and in the East selects ruins where they are to be found, "where neither houses nor ruins occur, it selects any trees tall and strong enough to provide a platform for its huge nest, and for this purpose none are more convenient than the fir tree." Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 248.

18. From the lofty trees which are the home of birds it is a natural transition to the lofty mountains which are the home of animals. The Syrian wild goat, lit. 'the climber,' is a species of ibex (1 Sam. xxiv. 2; Job xxxix. 1): see Tristram, p. 95. The 'coney,' Heb. *shāphān* = 'the hider,' is not the rabbit, but the *hyrax Syriacus*, a peculiar animal, not unlike a marmot in appearance, which "lives in holes in the rocks, where it makes its nest and conceals its young, and to which it retires at the least alarm." See Tristram, p. 75.

19—23. Moon and sun mark the seasons and the alternations of day and night. The work of the fourth day, Gen. i. 14.

The sun knoweth his going down.
Thou makest darkness, and it is night:
Wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep *forth*.
The young lions roar after *their* prey,
And seek their meat from God.
The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together,
And lay them down in their dens.
Man goeth forth unto his work
And to his labour until the evening.
O LORD, how manifold are thy works!
In wisdom hast thou made them all:
The earth is full *of* thy riches.
So is this great and wide sea,
Wherein *are* things creeping innumerable,
Both small and great beasts.

19 The changes of the moon mark periods of time and the proper times for festivals. Cp. Ecclus. xliii. 7, "From the moon is the sign for the festival." The sun knows and fulfils its daily duty. The sunset is mentioned, to introduce the picture of night in *vv.* 20 ff.; and night precedes day, as commonly in oriental reckoning.

21. The dreaded beasts of prey are part of God's creation, depending on His bounty. Cp. cxlvii. 9.

22. *they gather themselves together*] Better as R.V., they get them away.

24—30. An exclamation of wonder and admiration at the variety and wisdom of God's works introduces a description of the marvels of the sea, and the mystery of life. *Vv.* 25, 26 are based on Gen. i. 20, 21: *vv.* 27, 28 on Gen. i. 29, 30.

24. *in wisdom*] Cp. Prov. iii. 19; viii. 22 ff.

thy riches] The word may mean *thy possessions* (Vulg. Jer. *possessione tua*, representing a Sept. reading τῆς κτήσεώς σου): or, *thy creation* or *creatures* (LXX τῆς κτίσεώς σου, Syr., Targ.): but usage is in favour of the first sense. Cp. cv. 21.

25. So is *this great and wide sea*] R.V. rightly, Yonder is the sea, great and wide. It would almost seem as if the sea lay stretched before the Psalmist's gaze as he composed his poem. Dean Stanley has pointed out that all the natural features of the Psalm are in sight from the cedar grove of Lebanon (*Sermons in the East*, p. 217).

things creeping] Or, things moving; cp. Gen. i. 21; Ps. lxix. 34. The word (used in *v.* 20 of the stealthy movement of animals in quest of their prey) is not limited to reptiles properly so called. It may refer either to land animals or water animals, or may include both.

both small and great beasts] Living creatures, both small and great.

26 There go the ships:
There is that leviathan, *whom* thou hast made to play therein.
27 These wait all upon thee;
That *thou* mayest give *them* their meat in due season.
28 *That* thou givest them they gather:
Thou openest thine hand, they are filled *with* good.
29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled:
Thou takest away their breath, they die,
And return to their dust.
30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created:
And thou renewest the face of the earth.

26. The stately ships, which excited the wonder and admiration of the landsman (Prov. xxx. 19; Is. ii. 16), seem part of the life of the sea, and the mention of them suggests its use as a means of transit.

there is *that leviathan*] There is leviathan, whom thou hast formed, either (1) to play therein, or (2) to play with him. Both renderings are grammatically possible. For (1) Job xl. 20 offers a parallel, and for (2) Job xli. 5 (Heb. xl. 29). But (1) suits the context best. The thought required is not that the wildest and strongest of God's creatures are but as it were His tame pets, but that the sea is the playground of the mighty monsters which display His power and goodness as they disport themselves there in the enjoyment of their life. In Job xli *leviathan* means the crocodile, but here the name is evidently used of sea-monsters generally, particularly the great cetaceans, of which there are many, and formerly were probably many more, in the Mediterranean.

27. *These wait all* &c.] All of them wait upon thee. Not marine animals only, but all living creatures are meant, as in Gen. i. 29, 30. God is the great householder, dispensing to all His family their portions. Cp. cxlv. 15, 16; cxlvii. 9.

28. Thou givest unto them, they gather:
Thou openest thine hand, they are satisfied with good.

29. All creatures depend upon God for life as well as food. The breath or spirit of God is the source of the life-breath of His creatures. The Psalmist probably had Job xxxiv. 14, 15 in his mind. Cp. Acts xvii. 25; Col. i. 17. The 'hiding' of God's face is usually the symbol of His wrath; but here it denotes rather the withdrawal of His sustaining power. Cp. xxx. 7.

thou takest away their breath] Or, thou gatherest in, withdrawing the spirit lent for a time (Eccl. xii. 7), so that they expire, and their bodies return to the dust whence they were taken (Gen. iii. 19).

30. But life not death rules in Nature. A new generation takes the place of the old. Creation continues, for God is perpetually sending forth His spirit, and renewing the face of the earth with fresh life.

The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever:
The LORD shall rejoice in his works.
He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth:
He toucheth the hills, and they smoke.
I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live:
I will sing *praise* to my God while I have my being.
My meditation of him shall be sweet:
I will be glad in the LORD.
Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth,
And let the wicked be no more.
Bless thou the LORD, O my soul.
Praise ye the LORD.

31—35. Concluding prayers and vows.

31. **May the glory of Jehovah endure for ever!**
May Jehovah rejoice in his works!
32. **Who looketh on the earth, and it trembleth.**
Toucheth the mountains, and they smoke.

May this manifestation of God in Nature ever continue! May Jehovah never cease to rejoice in His works as He rejoiced when He pronounced all things to be very good (Gen. i. 31; Prov. viii. 31). A look, a touch are enough to remind the earth of the awful power of its Creator, Who if He willed could annihilate as easily as He created. The Psalmist has in mind Am. ix. 5 (cp. above *v.* 3), Ex. xix. 18; *v.* 32 *b* is imitated in cxliv. 5, *v.* 33 in cxlvi. 2.

34. **Let my meditation be sweet unto him:**
As for me, I will rejoice in Jehovah.

Sweet, i.e. acceptable, a word used of sacrifices in Jer. vi. 20; Hos. ix. 4; Mal. iii. 4. Cp. Ps. xix. 14. As Jehovah rejoices in His works (*v.* 31), so the Psalmist rejoices in Jehovah.

35. *Let the sinners be consumed* &c.] There is no need to make excuse for this conclusion of the Psalm. It is not an imprecation, but a solemn prayer for the restoration of the harmony of creation by the banishment from it of "all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity." The preceding verses (31, 32) have just hinted that there is something in the world which may hinder God from continuing to rejoice in His works. What is it?

> "Disproportioned sin
> Jarred against nature's chime, and with harsh din
> Broke the fair music that all creatures made
> To their great Lord, whose love their motion swayed
> In perfect diapason, whilst they stood
> In first obedience, and their state of good."

Modern thought would say, 'May sin be banished': but Hebrew thought is not abstract but concrete, and moreover the form of the prayer reminds us of the solemn truth that sin is a personal thing, which cannot be separated from the sinner, but has its existence through his

perverted will. It may be noted that the intensive form of the word for sinner implies obstinate and incorrigible habit.

As in Ps. civ, the Psalmist concludes as he began, *Bless Yehovah, O my soul*, to which is appended the general call to praise, *Hallelujah*, 'Praise ye Jah.' This word (for according to the Massoretic tradition it is to be written as one word except in cxxxv. 3) occurs nowhere but in the Psalter[1] and meets us here for the first time.

According to Graetz (*Comm.* p. 91), and Ginsburg (*Introd. to the Heb. Bible*, pp. 376 ff.), it was the summons addressed by the precentor to the congregation to join him in reciting the Psalm, and is explained by repeating the first verse after his recitation of each verse. Its proper place therefore is at the beginning not at the end of a Psalm, and in the LXX (with the possible exception of Ps. cl) it is always found at the beginning. In the Massoretic text however it occurs at both beginning and end of eight Psalms, at the beginning only of two, at the end only of five, and once in the text of the Psalm (cxxxv. 3).

PSALM CV.

The two historical Psalms which stand at the end of Book iv are closely related. Ps. cv is a Psalm of thanksgiving, recapitulating the marvellous works by which Jehovah demonstrated His faithfulness to the covenant which He made with Abraham. Ps. cvi is a Psalm of penitence, reciting the history of Israel's faithlessness and disobedience. They present, so to speak, the obverse and reverse of Israel's history; the common prophetic theme of Jehovah's loving kindness and Israel's ingratitude. They have much in common with Is. lxxviii, with which their author was evidently familiar; but that Psalm is distinguished by its didactic and monitory character and it combines the two strands of thought which are here separated.

Such a recital of the proofs of Jehovah's faithfulness as is contained in Ps. cv was very suitable as an encouragement to the community of the Restoration. If God had preserved the patriarchs, and made a nomad family into a strong nation, giving them possession of the land through which they wandered as strangers, He could again fulfil His purposes even through the feeble body of returned exiles (Is. lx. 22). That these Psalms belong to the period after the Return from Babylon is evident, for they presuppose not only the Exile (cvi. 47) but the restoration of the Temple-worship. Ps. cvi. 47, which at first sight might seem to imply that no return had yet taken place, must be understood as a prayer for the completion of the restoration by the return of the Israelites from all the countries in which they were scattered. The repeated call to "give thanks to Jehovah," to "praise Jah" corresponds exactly to the terms in which the function of the Levites is described in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles (Ezr. iii. 11; Neh. xii. 24; 1 Chron. xvi. 4;

[1] In Jer. xx. 13 the phrase is 'Praise ye Jehovah,' as in Ps. cxvii. 1. Cp. however Tobit xiii. 18, "All her streets shall say, Hallelujah": 3 Macc. vii. 13, "The priests and all the people shouted, Hallelujah."

&c.). On the other hand these Psalms are earlier than Chronicles (c. 300 B.C.). The festal anthem which the Chronicler introduces on the occasion of the translation of the Ark to Zion is a combination of Ps. cv. 1–15 (=1 Chron. xvi. 8–22) with Ps. xcvi (=1 Chron. xvi. 23–33) and cvi. 1, 47, 48 (=1 Chron. xvi. 34–36). It is certain that the Psalms stand in their original form in the Psalter, and that the anthem in Chronicles is merely a compilation; for cv. 1–14 is clearly but a portion of a connected poem, while there is an entire absence of connexion in Chron. between *vv.* 22 and 23, and between *vv.* 33 and 34. A theory has been advanced that the anthem is a later insertion in Chronicles, and consequently that the date of Chronicles does not fix a limit for the date of the Psalms; but this theory is untenable.

Though there is no marked strophical arrangement in Ps. cv, there is a certain symmetry in its plan. It consists of four nearly equal divisions.

i. The Israelites, as the seed of Abraham, the children of Jacob, are summoned to praise Jehovah for His faithfulness to His covenant with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (1—12).

ii. He guarded them in their wanderings, and led Jacob into Egypt, after He had prepared the way by sending Joseph before him (13—24).

iii. When the Egyptians oppressed the Israelites, He displayed His power in the judgements which led to their release (25—36).

iv. He brought them out of Egypt, protected them and provided for their wants in the wilderness, and settled them in the land of Canaan, that they might serve Him by grateful obedience to His laws (37—45).

O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: 105

1—6. The Israelites are summoned to proclaim to all the nations Jehovah's mighty doings for His people, and to stir up their own hearts to praise and thanksgiving by the recollection of His marvellous works.

1. The LXX is probably right in placing *Hallelujah* at the beginning of this Psalm instead of at the end of Ps. civ. The two companion Psalms ciii and civ will then begin and end with *Bless ye Jehovah*; and the two companion Psalms cv and cvi will begin and end with *Hallelujah*.

The first verse is taken verbatim from **Is. xii. 4.**

O give thanks unto the LORD] The LXX renders ἐξομολογεῖσθε, hence Vulg. and Jer. *confitemini*, 'make confession,' which may possibly be the primary meaning, from which the word derives its general sense *to praise* or *give thanks*. Pss. cvi, cvii, cxviii, cxxxvi begin with the same invitation.

It is natural to connect these Psalms in which "Give thanks unto Jehovah" and "Praise ye Jah" (Hallelujah) recur so frequently with the function of the Levites "to praise and to give thanks" (1 Chron. xvi. 4; Ezr. iii. 11; Neh. xii. 24; &c.), and to regard them as composed expressly for the service of the Second Temple.

call upon his name] Rather, proclaim his name, as in Ex. xxxiii. 19; xxxiv. 5, 6; cp. Deut. xxxii. 3.

Make known his deeds among the peoples.
2 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him:
Talk ye of all his wondrous works.
3 Glory ye in his holy name:
Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.
4 Seek the LORD, and his strength:
Seek his face evermore.
5 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done;
His wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;
6 O ye seed of Abraham his servant,

make known **his doings among the peoples**] It was Israel's mission to proclaim to the world Jehovah's revelation of His character made known to them in the facts of their history. Cp. ix. 11.

2. *sing psalms*] Or, make melody. Cp. xcii. 1, note.

talk ye] R.V. marg., *meditate*: cp. civ. 34. The primary meaning of the word is probably *to occupy oneself diligently with*: hence either *to meditate upon*, or as context and parallelism require here and in cxl. 5, *to speak, discourse of*, a meaning which the word regularly has in post-Biblical Heb.

his wondrous works] R.V., as A.V. in *v.* 5, his marvellous works. Cp. xcvi. 3, and see note on ix. 1.

3. *Glory ye in his holy name*] Cp. Is. xli. 16; and see note on ciii. 1.

let the heart &c.] True devotion leads to deep inward joy which will find expression in thanksgiving. Cp. Neh. viii. 10; Acts ii. 46, 47.

4. Two synonymous words are rendered *seek* in this verse. Both originally referred to the outward act of visiting the sanctuary, but both come to express the inward purpose of the heart as well. So far as they can be distinguished the first denotes the attitude of loving devotion, the second that of inquiry or supplication. To 'seek Jehovah' is the duty and the joy of the true Israelite. From His strength and presence alone can Israel derive the protection and blessing that it needs. *His strength* cannot here mean the Ark, as in lxxviii. 61.

5. *Remember*] Compare the frequent injunctions in Deuteronomy (vii. 18; viii. 2; &c.). But Israel's history had been one long record of forgetfulness (Ps. lxxviii. 11).

his wonders] A word often coupled with 'signs' (*v.* 27; Deut. iv. 34; &c.) to denote the miracles of the Exodus.

the judgments of his mouth] Not the precepts of the law, but the sentence pronounced and executed upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Ex. vi. 6; vii. 4; xii. 12).

6. Grammatically, *his servant* may refer either to *Abraham* or to *seed of Abraham*. The parallelism is in favour of the latter construction, and the LXX and Jer. actually read *his servants*: but exact parallelism is not always maintained, and *v.* 42 is decidedly in favour of connecting *his servant* with *Abraham*. For *Abraham* Chron. reads *Israel*.

Ye children of Jacob, his chosen.
He *is* the LORD our God:
His judgments *are* in all the earth.
He hath remembered his covenant for ever, 8
The word *which* he commanded to a thousand genera-
tions.
Which *covenant* he made with Abraham, 9
And his oath unto Isaac;
And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, 10
And to Israel *for* an everlasting covenant:
Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, 11
The lot of your inheritance:

his chosen] R.V. **his chosen ones**, to avoid the ambiguity of the A.V. Cp. *v.* 43; cvi. 5; Deut. iv. 37; &c.

This verse is to be connected with *vv.* 1—5: the form of address reminds the Israelites at once of their privilege and their duty.

7—12. The theme of the Psalm. Jehovah has been true to the promise which He made to the patriarchs, to give them the land of Canaan.

7. **He, Jehovah, is our God**] He stands in a special and peculiar relation to Israel the people of His choice: but He is no mere national Deity: *His judgements are in all the earth*; He exercises an universal rule over all nations as "the Judge of all the earth" (Gen. xviii. 25).

8 *He hath remembered*] Rather, **He remembereth.** The Heb. perfect here expresses a general truth guaranteed by past experience. Chron. has *Remember ye*; but the exhortation is out of place here. Jehovah's covenant is further described as *the word* of promise *which he commanded* (cp. cxi. 9), as it were enacting it as a law (cp. *statute*, *v.* 10, and ii. 7). *To a thousand generations* (Deut. vii. 9), parallel to and synonymous with *for ever*, is to be connected with *He remembereth.*

With this and the following verses comp. the promise of Lev. xxvi. 42—45.

9. 10. For the covenant with Abraham see Gen. xvii. 2 ff.; xv. 18; and cp. the promises, Gen. xii. 7; xiii. 14 ff. The oath sworn to Abraham (Gen. xxii. 16) was confirmed to Isaac (Gen. xxvi. 3), and to Jacob at Bethel when he was on his way to Paddan-aram (Gen. xxviii. 13 ff.), and again in the same place on his return, after his name had been changed to Israel (xxxv. 9 ff.). The promise made to Abraham was renewed to Isaac and Jacob, because in their persons it was limited to a particular branch of Abraham's descendants.

for a law] **For a statute, or, decree, as in ii. 7.**

11. The promise was made to the patriarchs individually ('unto *thee*'), but in them to their descendants also; hence '*your* inheritance.'

the lot &c.] The Heb. *chĕbĕl* means (1) a *measuring-cord*, (2) *a*

12 When they were *but a few* men in number;
Yea, *very* few, and strangers in it.
13 When they went from one nation to another,
From *one* kingdom to another people;
14 He suffered no man to do them wrong:
Yea, he reproved kings for their sakes;
15 *Saying*, Touch not mine anointed,
And do my prophets no harm.
16 Moreover, he called *for* a famine upon the land:

measured portion (cp. our 'rod'): so, for your appointed inheritance Cp. lxxviii. 55.

12. The Psalmist emphasises the marvellousness of the Divine promise by pointing out that it was made when the patriarchs were but an insignificant clan of protected aliens, and it seemed utterly improbable that they would ever become the owners of the land.

but a few *men in number*] Lit. *men of number*: a handful of men, easily counted. Jacob uses the same phrase of his family in Gen. xxxiv. 30.

yea, very few] The word may mean few in number, or little worth; here probably the former. Cp. Deut. vii. 7; xxvi. 5.

strangers] sojourners, foreigners under the protection of the owners of the country, without rights of citizenship. Cp. Gen. xxi. 23; xxiii. 4.

13—24. Jehovah's providential guidance of the patriarchs in their migrations.

13. *When they went* &c.] And when they went &c. The A.V. treats this verse as (virtually) the protasis to *v.* 14: the R.V. places a semicolon at the end of *v.* 12, and a full stop at the end of *v.* 13, and treats *v.* 13 as the continuation of *v.* 12. Either construction is grammatically possible, but that of the A.V. is preferable. *Vv.* 12 emphasises the conditions under which the promise was given, and concludes the first division of the Psalm. *Vv.* 13—15 describe the migrations of the patriarchs among the different nations of Canaan, the Egyptians, and the Philistines, as recorded in the Book of Genesis. In all their wanderings Jehovah guarded them from harm, reproving even kings such as Pharaoh (Gen. xii. 10 ff.) and Abimelech (Gen. xx, xxvi) on their account.

15. Jehovah's words. *Saying* is rightly supplied.

Touch not] The phrase is suggested by Gen. xx. 6; cp. xxvi. 11.

mine anointed ones...*my prophets*] The patriarchs were not actually anointed, but the term is applied to them as bearing the seal of a Divine consecration in virtue of which their persons were sacred and inviolable. Abraham is called a prophet in Gen. xx. 7 as an intercessor, and the term is applied to the patriarchs generally as the recipients of Divine revelation.

16 ff. The events which led to the migration of Jacob into Egypt.

16. And *he called*] So 2 Kings viii. 1; Am. v. 8; vii. 4; ix. 6; Hagg. i. 11. Observe the emphasis upon direct Divine agency in *vv.* 16,

He brake the whole staff of bread.
He sent a man before them, 17
Even Joseph, *who* was sold for a servant:
Whose feet they hurt with fetters: 18
He was laid *in* iron:
Until the time that his word came: 19
The word of the LORD tried him.

17. The famine in the land of Canaan (Gen. xli. 54) was the instrument which He summoned to effect His purpose.

he brake &c.] So Lev. xxvi. 26. Bread is the staff, i.e. support, of life (Is. iii. 1; cp. Ps. civ. 15).

17. He had sent a man before them;
Joseph was sold for a slave.

Before the famine came, God had sent Joseph into Egypt to prepare the way for their migration thither. So Joseph himself says, "God sent me before you to preserve life" (Gen. xlv. 5, 7; cp. l. 20), recognising that the hand of God had permitted the cruelty of his brothers in order to effect His purpose.

18. *Whose feet*] R.V. His feet. This verse is merely a poetical description of imprisonment. The narrative in Gen. does not hint that Joseph was severely treated.

he was laid in *iron*] I.e. as R.V., he was laid in (chains of) iron. But the Heb. literally means, *(into) iron entered his soul*; and *his soul* is not a mere equivalent for *he*, but denotes (though we have no word by which it could be rendered here) Joseph's whole sensitive personality. He keenly felt the degradation and suffering of his unjust imprisonment. Thus the sense is substantially the same as that of the picturesque rendering of the P.B.V. which has passed into a proverbial phrase, "the iron entered into his soul[1]." This rendering, which is that of the Targ. and Vulg.[2], is defended by Delitzsch and others, but is questionable for grammatical reasons.

19. Until the time that his word should come to pass
The promise of Jehovah tried him.

Two different Hebrew words are rendered *word* in the A.V. It seems best to understand them both of the word or promise of Jehovah communicated to Joseph in the dreams which excited the enmity of his brethren (Gen. xxxvii. 5 ff.). The promise of Jehovah is as it were personified as Jehovah's agent employed to fit Joseph for his high station (cp. xxix. 50). It tested him, purified and refined his character (Job xxiii. 10), as it led him through dark ways of humiliation, till the time came for him to be raised to the honour for which Providence destined him.

[1] Coverdale's original rendering (1535) was, *the yron peersed his herte*. The alteration in the Great Bible (1539) was no doubt suggested by Münster's *ferreum (vinculum) intravit usque ad animam eius.*

[2] According to the present text, which has *ferrum pertransiit animam eius*. But as all the MSS. of the LXX have σίδηρον διῆλθεν ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ, it seems probable that *animam* is a corruption for *anima*.

20 The king sent and loosed him;
Even the ruler of the people, and let him go free.
21 He made him lord of his house,
And ruler of all his substance:
22 To bind his princes at his pleasure;
And teach his senators wisdom.
23 Israel also came *into* Egypt;
And Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.
24 And he increased his people greatly;
And made them stronger than their enemies.
25 He turned their heart to hate his people,
To deal subtilly with his servants.
26 He sent Moses his servant;

By some commentators 'his word' has been taken to mean *Joseph's* word, either (1) his story of his dreams (Gen. xxxvii. 5 ff., xlii. 9), or (2) his interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams (Gen. xli. 16 ff.). But 'his word' is not a natural expression for Joseph's relation of his dream, and his liberation from prison took place before his interpretation of Pharaoh's dream was verified by the event.

20. *The king sent* &c.] Gen. xli. 14.

21. 22. See Gen. xli. 39—44. Joseph, who so lately was 'bound in prison,' is invested with authority to imprison even princes, and in virtue of his wisdom is made the director of Pharaoh's counsellors.

P.B.V. *that he might inform* (i.e. instruct) *his princes* follows the LXX (Vulg.) and Jer., *ut erudiret principes eius.*

senators] Lit. *elders.*

23. *Israel also*] So Israel; the great ancestor of the nation is still meant.

the land of Ham] Cp. *v.* 27; lxxviii. 51.

24. And he made his people exceeding fruitful,
And made them mightier than their adversaries.

Jehovah is the subject of the sentence. The A.V. fails to bring out the connexion of the verse with Ex. i. 7, "The children of Israel *were fruitful*...and were *exceeding mighty*."

25—36. The enmity of the Egyptians to Israel, and the display of Jehovah's power which prepared the way for the Exodus.

25. *He turned their heart*] The rendering of the Targ., followed in P.B.V., *Whose heart turned*, is grammatically possible, but A.V. is no doubt right. The Psalmist does not shrink from attributing the hostility of the Egyptians to God's agency, because it was due to the blessings which He bestowed upon Israel; and inasmuch as it led to the Exodus, it was a link in the chain of God's action.

to deal subtilly] By their crafty plans for destroying Israel, Ex. i. 10 ff.

26. *Moses his servant*] Ex. xiv. 31, and often.

And Aaron whom he had chosen.
They shewed his signs among them, 27
And wonders in the land of Ham.
He sent darkness, and made it dark; 28
And they rebelled not against his word.
He turned their waters into blood, 29
And slew their fish.

27. *They shewed* &c.] Moses and Aaron. But the parallel passages in lxxviii. 43; Ex. x. 2 (cp. Jer. xxxii. 20) make it probable that we should follow most of the Ancient Versions (LXX, Aq. Symm. Syr. Jer.) in reading the singular. **He set**; and this agrees better with the context, as Jehovah is the subject in *vv.* 24, 25, 26, 28, 29.

his signs] Lit. *the acts* or *matters of his signs* (cp. *the acts* or *matters of his wondrous works* in cxlv. 5): i.e. his various signs: hardly, *the words* or *message of his signs*, "as being declarations of God's will and command to let His people go."

28. It is difficult to say why the ninth plague (Ex. x. 21 ff.) is placed first here. Possibly, like the fifth and sixth, it was not originally mentioned, and the verse was the marginal gloss of a reader who noticed the omission, which was subsequently inserted in the text in the wrong place. If however the text is sound, perhaps the ninth plague is mentioned first, because it is regarded as the plague which wrought conviction in the minds of the Egyptians, who were already anxious that the Israelites should be allowed to depart (Ex. x. 7; xi. 2, 3); though the further plague of the death of the firstborn was needed finally to convince Pharaoh. The plague of darkness was specially calculated to inspire the worshippers of the sun-god with the sense of Jehovah's power. The next line **and they rebelled not against his words** confirms this interpretation. 'They' must refer to the Egyptians, and the allusion must be to their change of feeling towards the Israelites after the plague of darkness, described in Ex. xi. 2, 3. Some commentators suppose that 'they' refers to Moses and Aaron, who did not disobey God's commands, as they afterwards did at Meribah (Num. xx. 24; xxvii. 14), but accepted their perilous mission. Such a statement however does not seem natural in the present context. Others read *they observed not* (שָׁמְרוּ for מָרוּ). Others follow the LXX and Syr. in omitting the negative. So in effect Coverdale (following the Zürich Bible, 'dann sy warend seinem geheyss nit gehorsam'), *for they were not obedient unto his word*; P.B.V. *and they were not* &c. But the remark would be out of place at the point when the resistance of the Egyptians had been overcome.

his word] So the *Q'rē*; R.V. **his words** follows the *K'thībh*, which is supported by the LXX, Aq., and Jer.

29. After mentioning the crucial plague of the darkness, the Psalmist refers briefly to the other plagues, omitting however the fifth and sixth, and inverting the order of the third and fourth.

he turned &c.] The first plague, Ex. vii. 14 ff., 21.

30 Their land brought forth frogs in abundance,
In the chambers of their kings.
31 He spake, and there came divers sorts *of flies*,
And lice in all their coasts.
32 He gave them hail *for* rain,
And flaming fire in their land.
33 He smote their vines also and their fig trees;
And brake the trees of their coasts.
34 He spake, and the locusts came,
And caterpillars, and that without number,
35 And did eat up all the herbs in their land,
And devoured the fruit of their ground.
36 He smote also all the first-born in their land,
The chief of all their strength.
37 He brought them forth also with silver and gold:
And *there was* not *one* feeble *person* among their tribes.

30. *Their land* &c.] R.V. **Their land swarmed with frogs.** The second plague, Ex. viii. 1 ff.

31. **He spake, and there came swarms of flies** (R.V.): the fourth plague, Ex. viii. 20 ff., cp. Ps. lxxviii. 45: **and lice** (or *sand-flies* or *fleas*) **in all their borders**: the third plague, Ex. viii. 16 ff., not mentioned in Ps. lxxviii.

their coasts] I.e. **their borders.**

32. 33. The seventh plague, of hail accompanied by thunder and lightning, **Ex. ix. 13 ff., 25, 26; cp. Ps. lxxviii. 47, 48.**

34. 35. The eighth plague, Ex. x. 1 ff.; Ps. lxxviii. 46. The Heb. word *yĕlĕq*, R.V. **canker-worm**, as A.V. in Joel i. 4, is not used in Exodus. It probably denotes the locust in its larva state.

35. And ate up all the herbage in their land,
And ate up the fruit of their ground.

The Heb. word for 'herbage' is not confined to grass, but includes vegetable growth generally with the exception of trees (civ. 14).

36. The tenth and last plague, Ex. xi. 1 ff. As in Ps. lxxviii. 51, the firstborn are described **as the beginning, or firstlings of all their strength.** Cp. Gen. xlix. 3; Deut. xxi. 17.

37—45. The Exodus the miracles of the wilderness, and the settlement in Canaan.

37. So he brought them forth with silver and gold:
And there was none that stumbled among his tribes.

Israel marched out like a victorious army, with spoils which were virtually the reward of their long compulsory service (Ex. xii. 35, 36): like a host of warriors in which none are faint or weary (Is. v. 27).

his *tribes*] Jehovah's tribes (cxxii. 4) rather than Israel's (Num xxiv. 2).

Egypt was glad when they departed:
For the fear of them that fell upon them.
He spread a cloud for a covering;
And fire to give light in the night.
The people asked, and he brought quails,
And satisfied them *with* the bread of heaven.
He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out;
They ran in the dry *places like* a river.
For he remembered his holy promise,
And Abraham his servant.
And he brought forth his people with joy,
And his chosen with gladness:
And gave them the lands of the heathen:
And they inherited the labour of the people;
That they might observe his statutes,
And keep his laws.

38. Cp. Ex. xii. 33.

for the fear &c.] For dread of them had fallen upon them. Cp. Ex. xv. 16.

39. Ex. xiii. 21, 22; xiv. 19, 20. But here the cloud is regarded as a canopy to shelter them from the burning rays of the sun in the desert, rather than as a protection from the Egyptians. Cp. Is. iv. 5, 6.

40. *The people asked*] The Heb. verb is in the sing., but with LXX Jer. Syr. Targ. we should read the plural, They asked. See Ex. xvi, and cp. Ps. lxxviii. 18 ff. The murmuring of the Israelites is not mentioned, because the Psalmist's object is to point to God's goodness, not to Israel's faithlessness.

the bread of heaven] The manna: cp. lxxviii. 24, 25; Neh. ix. 15.

41. *the rock*] In Rephidim, Ex. xvii. 1 ff. A different word ('cliff') is used in Num. xx. 8 ff. The language is borrowed from Ps. lxxviii. 15, 16, 20: cp. Is. xli. 18; xlviii. 21.

42. The Psalmist returns to his theme, *v.* 8. Faithfulness to His promise was God's motive for redeeming Israel.

his holy promise] Lit., his holy word (*v.* 8): the sacred promise which cannot be broken.

and *Abraham his servant*] Or, with A. his servant (*v.* 6). Cp. Ex. ii. 24. But the A.V. may be right.

43. *with gladness*] With jubilant singing, the rejoicing on the shores of the Red Sea, Ex. xv. But the language is a reminiscence of the prophecies of the Exodus from Babylon, Is. xxxv. 10; li. 11; lv. 12.

44. And he gave them the lands of the nations.
And they took possession of the labour of the peoples.

See Deut. vi. 10, 11.

45. The object of God's favour to Israel was
That they might keep his statutes,
And observe his laws,

Praise ye the LORD.

and obedience was the condition of their retaining these blessings. Cp. lxxviii. 7; Deut. iv. 1, 40; xxvi. 17, 18: and the terms in which the purpose of Abraham's call is described in Gen. xviii. 19 (R.V.).

Praise ye the LORD] This Hallelujah is omitted by the LXX and Syr.; see note on civ. 35: but the recital of God's mercies fitly concludes with a call to praise.

PSALM CVI.

This Psalm, as has already been remarked, is a companion to the preceding one. It may well have been composed by the same poet: at any rate it belongs to the same period. It is in the main a confession of the faithlessness and ingratitude which has marked every step of Israel's history, a confession which is the fitting preface to a prayer for the restoration of the nation. It breathes the spirit of Solomon's prayer at the Dedication of the Temple (1 Kings viii). A similar confession is found in Neh. ix: Dan. ix and Baruch ii should also be compared. *Vv.* 1, 47, 48 form the conclusion of the anthem in 1 Chr. xvi. 34—36.

The Psalmist begins with an invitation to praise Jehovah for His infinite mercy and goodness, for these attributes are the ground of His confidence in appealing to Him once more to save His people; and he adds a personal prayer that he may be permitted himself to rejoice in the sight of the renewed prosperity of Jehovah's people (1—5).

But Israel—and Israel of the present is one with Israel of the past—has sinned grievously (6). The national history is one long record of failure to understand God's purpose and of resistance to His Will. The Psalmist recites typical instances of their sins from the Exodus to the Entry into Canaan (7—33); and referring in general terms to their subsequent history (34—46) concludes with a prayer for restoration (47) to which the long confession of sin is clearly intended to lead up.

Thus the historical retrospect is set in a liturgical framework. The introductory call to praise is not inappropriate, for without the acknowledgement of God's invincible goodness the recollection of Israel's sins would be hopelessly crushing. But the confession of those sins is the necessary condition of the removal of their punishment; and the prayer for restoration, short as it is, is obviously the goal towards which the whole Psalm is directed.

Note the author's familiarity with Isaiah lxiii and Ezek. xx.

106 Praise ye the LORD.

1—5. The Psalmist prefaces his Psalm of penitence with a call to praise Jehovah for that unfailing goodness which is the ground of Israel's hope in its present extremity; and with a prayer that he himself may be privileged to see and share in the restoration of Jehovah's people.

1. *Praise ye the LORD*] Heb. **Hallelujah**. See on civ. 35. Here and

O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? 2
Who can shew forth all his praise?
Blessed *are* they that keep judgment, 3
And he that doeth righteousness at all times.
Remember me, O LORD, with the favour *that thou bearest* 4
unto thy people:

elsewhere the initial Hallelujah is omitted in P.B.V., being regarded, as in LXX and Vulg., as a kind of title only.

O give thanks...for ever] A liturgical formula, found in the Psalter only in post-exilic Psalms (cvii. 1; cxviii. 1; cxxxvi. 1; cp. c. 5; Ezra iii. 10, 11; 1 Macc. iv. 24), but in familiar use before the Exile. See Jer. xxxiii. 11, and note the slight difference in the form, which militates against the view that the words are an interpolation there.

good] LXX rightly χρηστός, for it is not Jehovah's essential goodness that is meant, but His kindness and graciousness towards Israel. Cp. Is. lxiii. 7.

for his mercy endureth for ever] Israel's sin cannot exhaust Jehovah's lovingkindness.

2. No human voice can adequately celebrate Jehovah's mighty acts (*v.* 8; xx. 5) or worthily proclaim His praises (cviii. 3). For the thought cp. xl. 5; and note again the parallels in Is. lxiii. 15 ("thy mighty acts," R.V.), 7 ("the praises of the LORD").

3. From the thought of the mercy and the might of Jehovah which are the ground of Israel's hope, the Psalmist passes to the conditions of participation in the blessing for which he looks. Happy those who obey the Divine command, given in view of the near approach of Jehovah's Advent to redeem, "Keep judgement, and do righteousness" (Is. lvi. 1): who repent, and bring forth fruits worthy of their repentance, conforming their conduct to the demands and will of God. Cp. cv. 45.

he that doeth] Probably we should read *they that do* (עֹשֵׂי for עֹשֶׂה, with LXX and other Versions).

4, 5. The personal prayer of these verses is not out of place. It need not be regarded as the devout ejaculation of some reader, written in the margin of his copy, from which it was subsequently introduced into the text. Nor can it be regarded as the prayer of the community personified, for the speaker distinguishes himself from the community in *v.* 5.

It should be compared with the prayers interspersed in Nehemiah's memoirs (v. 19; vi. 14, xiii. 14, 22, 31), and with the earnest desire of the author of Ps. lxxxix (*vv.* 46 ff.) that he may live to see the restoration. Doubtless every individual who used the Psalm would appropriate it to himself. The LXX reads 'remember *us*...visit *us*,' but this is probably only an assimilation to *v.* 6.

with the favour that thou bearest *unto thy people*] Lit. *with* (or *in*) *the favour* (or *acceptance*) *of thy people*. In Is. xlix. 8 'a time of *acceptance*' stands in parallelism with 'a day of salvation.' The Psalmist

O visit me with thy salvation;
5 That *I* may see the good of thy chosen,
That *I* may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation,
That *I* may glory with thine inheritance.
6 We have sinned with our fathers,
We have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.
7 Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt;
They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies;
But provoked *him* at the sea, even at the Red [Sea]

ways that he personally may share in the restoration granted to Jehovah's favour (lxxxv. 1) by His saving mercy.

5. That I may see with satisfaction the prosperity of thy chosen ones (cv. 6, 43).

I (in marked) The word *gey*, 'nation,' is not commonly applied to Israel, but only here and in Zeph. ii. 9 is Israel spoken of as *Jehovah's nation*. In the plural it is used of heathen nations only.

thine inheritance Cp. Deut. iv. 20; ix. 29; and for others generally, Ps. xxxiii. 12; "Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah, the people he hath *chosen* for his inheritance."

6 The main purpose of the Psalm is now stated; the confession of the constant sin of Israel is a moment of humility. The acknowledgement that the nation does not deserve the mercy for which it prays is the primary condition of forgiveness and restoration to God's favour. The language is borrowed from Solomon's prayer (1 Kings viii. 47) and the accumulation of synonyms expresses the thoroughness of Israel's guilt. Cp. Daniel's confession (Dan. ix. 5), and the confession of the Jews in Babylon in Baruch ii. 12.

We have sinned with our fathers This remarkable expression is not to be weakened to mean merely that the present generation had sinned like their ancestors, but gives expression to the profound sense of national solidarity, which speaks in many other places of Scripture, and rests on very deep facts in the life of nations and their individual members" (Maclaren). Cp. Lev. xxvi. 39, 40; Jer. iii. 25; xiv. 20.

7—12. The first instance of Israel's sin; their unbelief and murmuring at the Red Sea.

7. Our fathers in Egypt considered not thy marvellous works:
They remembered not the abundance of thy lovingkindnesses,
And were rebellious at the sea, even at the Red Sea.

Lack of insight (cp. Deut. xxxii. 28, 29) had characterised Israel from the first. The 'marvellous works' of Jehovah (cv. 2, 5) by which He had effected their deliverance from Egypt (lxxviii. 43 ff.; cv. 27 ff.) had failed to make them understand His character and will. So short were their memories, that at the first sign of danger, they rebelled against God's purpose to deliver them (Ex. xiv. 11, 12). Again and again forgetfulness of past mercies is stigmatized as the source of sin. Cp. *vv.* 13,

Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake,
That *he* might make his mighty power to be known.
He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up:
So he led them through the depths, as *through* the wilderness.
And he saved them from the hand of him that hated *them*,
And redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.
And the waters covered their enemies:
There was not one of them left.
Then believed they his words;
They sang his praise.
They soon forgat his works;
They waited not for his counsel:
But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness,
And tempted God in the desert.

21; lxxviii. 11; Deut. xxxii. 18; and often; and Israel's sin is described as 'rebellion';—obstinate resistance to the revealed Will of God. Cp. *vv.* 33, 43, and lxxviii. 17, note.

The construction of the last line is suspicious, and it has been plausibly conjectured that we should read, *and rebelled against the Most High at the Red Sea*, as in lxxviii. 17, 56.

8. Their conduct would have justified Jehovah in taking them at their word, and leaving them to return to Egypt, but *for His name's sake*, in order to uphold His character as a God of mercy, and to make known His might to the nations of the earth (lxxvii. 14), He delivered them. Cp. Ezek. xx. 9, 14, a chapter evidently in the Psalmist's mind: see *vv.* 26, 27.

9. *He rebuked* &c.] Cp. civ. 7; Is. l. 2; Nah. i. 4.

so he led them &c.] Apparently a reminiscence of Is. lxiii. 13: cp. Is. li. 10.

as through a *wilderness*] I.e. on dry ground, Ex. xiv. 22. But R.V. marg. may be right in rendering *pasture-land*, suggesting the metaphor of a flock, lxxvii. 20.

11. See Ex. xiv. 28. *enemies*] R.V. adversaries.

12. See Ex. xiv. 31; xv. 1. The allusion to their momentary faith and gratitude emphasises the relapse which *v.* 13 goes on to describe.

13—15. A second instance of Israel's sin, in murmuring for flesh.

13. *They soon forgat*] Lit., *They made haste* (*and*) *forgat*. They had gone but three days' journey from the Red Sea when they murmured for water (Ex. xv. 22 ff.), only six weeks later they were murmuring for food (Ex. xvi. 2 ff.); and in Rephidim again they murmured for water (Ex. xvii. 2 ff.). In their faithless impatience they refused to wait for God's plan of providing for their wants.

14. A glance at yet another occasion of murmuring and its punish-

15 And he gave them their request;
But sent leanness into their soul.
16 They envied Moses also in the camp,
And Aaron the saint of the LORD.
17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,
And covered the company of Abiram.
18 And a fire was kindled in their company;
The flame burnt up the wicked.
19 They made a calf in Horeb,
And worshipped the molten image.
20 Thus they changed their glory
Into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.

ment. The phrase **and they fell a lusting**, is taken from Num. xi. 4; cp. Ps. lxxviii. 29, 30. They *tempted* God, i.e. tested Him, put Him to the proof, by questioning His will and ability to provide for them (lxxviii. 18).

15. They complained "Our soul is dried away" (Num. xi. 6), our vitality is exhausted; but the satisfaction of their self-willed lust brought sickness and death not life and vigour, and "the graves of lust" marked the scene of their sin and its punishment.

16—18. A third sin; jealousy of the authority of Moses and Aaron (Num. xvi).

16. *the saint of the LORD*] The holy one of Jehovah, specially set apart and consecrated to His service. The malcontents alleged that all the congregation were holy, and Moses answered that Jehovah would shew who were His, and who were holy (Num. xvi. 3—7).

17. The Psalmist follows Deut. xi. 6 in naming Dathan and Abiram only. Korah's family did not perish (Num. xxvi. 11).

18. "A fire came out from Jehovah, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense" (Num. xvi. 35). The rebels are called "these wicked men" in Num. xvi. 26.

19—23. A fourth sin; the worship of the calf (Ex. xxxii; Deut. ix. 8 ff.).

19. *in Horeb*] The name always given to Sinai in Deuteronomy (except xxxiii. 2). The use of it seems to indicate that the narrative of Deut. ix. 8 ff. was in the Psalmist's mind. Cp. notes on *vv.* 23, 25, 29. In Horeb, "the mount of God" (Ex. iii. 1), when Jehovah was revealing Himself to them (Deut. iv. 10 ff.), they limited and materialised and degraded the idea of Deity, in defiance of the express commandment which He had given them.

20. So they exchanged their glory
For the likeness of an ox that eateth grass.

Jehovah was the glory of Israel (Deut. iv. 6—8; x. 21); and this spiritual invisible God they bartered for the likeness of an animal, such

They forgat God their saviour, 21
Which had done great *things* in Egypt,
Wondrous works in the land of Ham, 22
And terrible *things* by the Red sea.
Therefore he said that *he* would destroy them, 23
Had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach,
To turn away his wrath, lest *he* should destroy *them*.
Yea, they despised the pleasant land, 24
They believed not his word:
But murmured in their tents, 25
And hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD.

as they were forbidden to make (Deut. iv. 16—18; Ex. xx. 4). Cp. Jer. ii. 11.

The reading *their glory* is reckoned as one of the eighteen *Tiqqūnē Sōpherim*[1] or 'corrections of the scribes,' and is said to stand for 'his glory.' It is disputed whether the term means that the scribes actually altered the text from motives of reverence, or held that *his glory* was what the Psalmist would have written, had he not purposely avoided it as an indecorous expression. It is noteworthy that some MSS of the LXX (Nᵃᶜᵃ ART) read *his glory*, and to this form of the text St Paul refers in Rom. i. 23. The Targ. gives 'the glory of their Lord.'

21, 22. These verses emphasise the ingratitude of the Israelites. *The land of Ham* as in cv. 23, 27 from lxxviii. 51.

23. Cp. Ex. xxxii. 10 ff.; Num. xiv. 11 ff. But the language is taken from Deut. ix. 25, 26, where the same *two* words for 'destroy' are used as here.

stood before him in the breach] A military metaphor. Moses confronted God with intercession like the warrior who stands in the breach of the city wall to repel the enemy at the risk of his life. Cp. Ezek. xxii. 30; Jer. xviii. 20.

24—27. A fifth instance of Israel's sin; their unbelief and cowardice on the return of the spies (Num. xiii, xiv).

24. *They despised*, or *rejected* (as Num. xiv. 31), *the pleasant land* (Jer. iii. 19; Zech. vii. 14), the delightful and desirable land of Canaan; and disbelieved Jehovah's promise to give it them (Deut. i. 32).

25. *But murmured in their tents*] From Deut. i. 27, a graphic picture of the Israelites sulking in their tents instead of boldly preparing for the march.

[1] See Ginsburg, *Introd. to the Heb. Bible*, pp. 347 ff., who holds the view that the Scribes altered the text: and Barnes in the *Journal of Theol. Studies*, i. 387 ff., who holds that the so-called corrections are interpretations not readings.

26 Therefore he lifted up his hand against them,
To overthrow them in the wilderness:
27 To overthrow their seed also among the nations,
And to scatter them in the lands.
28 They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor,
And ate the sacrifices of the dead.
29 Thus they provoked *him* to anger with their inventions.
And the plague brake in upon them.

26. So he lifted up his hand unto them
That he would make them fall in the wilderness.

i.e. He swore solemnly. See Num. xiv. 28, 29, 32, "As I live...your carcases shall fall in the wilderness." 'Lifting up the hand' to heaven is man's gesture as he appeals to God in an oath. The phrase is transferred 'anthropopathically' to God. Cp. Ex. vi. 8; Deut. xxxii. 40; Ezek. xx. 23.

27. And that he would scatter their seed among the nations.
And disperse them in the lands.

Almost verbatim as Ezek. xx. 23, from which the text must be corrected here. The Heb. words for *make to fall* and *scatter* are very similar (הפיל...הפיץ), and the former was accidentally repeated from *v.* 26. The allusion to the warnings of banishment from the land in Lev. xxvi. 33; Deut. xxviii. 64 is suggested by the mention of the exclusion of the faithless Israelites from the land in *v.* 26.

28—31. A sixth instance; the sin of participating in the abominations of Moabite worship.

28. *They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor*] Attached themselves as devotees. The phrase is taken from Num. xxv. 3. The LXX renders ἐτελέσθησαν, *they were initiated*; but the word does not necessarily denote this. *Peor* seems to have been a locality (Num. xxiii. 28), and *Baal-peor* was the particular Baal worshipped there by the Moabites.

and ate the sacrifices of the dead] See Num. xxv. 2. By *the dead* are meant heathen gods in contrast to Jehovah, the one living and true God. Cp. cxv. 4 ff.; Jer. x. 11; Wisdom xiii. 10 "Miserable were they, and in dead things were their hopes, who called them gods which are works of men's hands"; xv. 17; 1 Cor. xii. 2. Participation in the sacrificial feasts of the Moabites was an act of communion with their lifeless gods. There is no reference to ancestor worship or funeral offerings.

29. **And they provoked** *him*] to anger with their doings] Again a Deuteronomic expression. Cp. Deut. iv. 25; ix. 18; xxxi. 29; xxxii. 16, 21. 'Inventions' of A.V. reproduces the Vulg. *adinventionibus suis*.

a *plague*] Lit. *smiting*: either the slaughter of the guilty Israelites which had been enjoined (Num. xxv. 4, 5), or, as the word commonly means (Num. xvi. 48, &c.), a divinely inflicted pestilence.

Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: 30
And *so* the plague was stayed.
And *that* was counted unto him for righteousness 31
Unto all generations for evermore.
They angered *him* also at the waters of strife, 32
So that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:
Because they provoked his spirit, 33
So that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.
They did not destroy the nations, 34

30. *Then stood up Phinehas*] Cp. Num. xxv. 7; and for 'stood.' Num. xvi. 48.

and executed judgment] So rightly Jerome, *iudicavit*. P.B.V. *prayed* follows the Syr. and Targ.; but this is not the regular meaning of the form of the verb, and does not agree with the history.

and so *the plague was stayed*] From Num. xxv. 8.

31. The zeal of Phinehas was an act of faith. He was a true son of Abraham (Gen. xv. 6); and his reward was "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood" (Num. xxv. 12, 13).

32, 33. A new sin: the murmuring at Meribah (Num. xx. 1—13). It is perhaps placed last as a climax because in this case Moses was involved by Israel's sin. The faith and patience of the leader who had endured so long gave way at last.

32. *They angered* him] Another Deuteronomic word (Deut. ix. 7, 8, 22). The object of the verb is not expressed, but is certainly not Moses but Jehovah as in *v.* 29.

at the waters of strife] Rather, of Meribah (Num. xx. 13). The word became a proper name (xcv. 8).

so that it went ill with] The people's unbelief was the cause of the impatience and presumption, for which Moses was punished by exclusion from Canaan. Cp. Deut. i. 37; iii. 26.

33. Because they were rebellious against his spirit,
And he spake rashly with his lips.

The cause of Jehovah's anger and Moses' punishment was the rebellion of the Israelites against the guidance of God's spirit, and the rash utterance of Moses which it was its consequence. Moses' speech "Hear now, ye rebels! out of this cliff must we fetch you water?" and his striking the rock when he was commanded to speak to it, indicates that his sin consisted in impatience and want of faith.

The usage of the verb and the parallel of Is. lxiii. 10 are decisive in favour of taking *his spirit* to mean God's spirit not Moses' spirit: and though the term *rebellion* is applied to the conduct of Moses and Aaron in Num. xx. 24, *they were rebellious* must refer to the Israelites and not to them, as Aaron has not been mentioned. *v.* 33*a* will thus be parallel to *v.* 32*a*, and 33*b* to 32*b*.

34—39. The continued disobedience of Israel even after the Entry

Concerning whom the LORD commanded them:
35 But were mingled among the heathen,
And learned their works.
36 And they served their idols:
Which were a snare unto them.
37 Yea, they sacrificed their sons
And their daughters unto devils,
38 And shed innocent blood,
Even the blood of their sons and of their daughters,
Whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan:
And the land was polluted with blood.
39 Thus were they defiled with their own works,

into Canaan. Neglecting the command to exterminate the Canaanites they became infected by their abominations.

34. They did not destroy the peoples,
As Jehovah had commanded them.

For the command so often repeated see Ex. xxiii. 32, 33; xxxiv. 12 ff.; Deut. vii. 2 ff.: and for the neglect of it, Judg. i. 21, 27, 29 ff., ii. 1 ff.

35. **But mingled themselves with the nations** (R.V.), by matrimonial alliance (Ezra ix. 2) and intermarriage generally (Judg. iii. 5, 6).

36. *which were &c.*] And they became a snare unto them, as they had been forewarned, Ex. xxiii. 33, &c. P.B.V. *which turned to their own decay* = which proved their ruin.

37. *unto devils*] Better, demons (LXX Syr. Targ Jer.). From Deut. xxxii. 17, "they sacrificed unto demons, which were no god," the only other passage in the O.T. where the word *shēdīm* occurs. "In Assyrian, *shēdu* is the name of the divinities represented by the bull-colossi, so often found at the front of Assyrian palaces, who were regarded apparently not as gods properly so called, but as subordinate spirits, demi-gods or genii, invested with power for good or evil." Etymologically the Heb. word may mean *lords*, but the precise idea attached to it cannot now be determined. Most probably it "denotes some kind of subordinate spirit or demi-god." Driver on Deut. xxxii. 17.

38. Human sacrifices, the horror of which was intensified by the tender age of the victims and their relation to the offerers, are mentioned as the climax of the abominations of the Canaanites (Deut. xii. 31; xviii. 9, 10), and of the Israelites who copied their ways (Ezek. xvi. 20, 21; xx. 31).

the land was polluted with blood] Cp. Num. xxxv. 33, 34; and for the thought of the defilement of a land by the sins of its inhabitants see Lev. xviii. 24 ff.; Is. xxiv. 5; Jer. iii. 1, 2, 9. The Canaanites had been condemned to extermination for their enormities; but Israel failed to take warning from their fate.

39. So they were defiled in their works,

And went a whoring with their own inventions.
Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his 40
people,
Insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance.
And he gave them into the hand of the heathen; 41
And they that hated them ruled over them.
Their enemies also oppressed them, 42
And they were brought into subjection under their hand
Many times did he deliver them; 43
But they provoked *him* with their counsel,
And were brought low for their iniquity.
Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, 44
When he heard their cry:
And he remembered for them his covenant, 45
And repented according to the multitude of his mercies.
He made them also to be pitied 46
Of all those that carried them captives.

And went a whoring in their doings.

As the relation of Israel to Jehovah is expressed by the figure of marriage (Hos. ii. 2 ff., and often), the abandonment of Jehovah for other gods is described as infidelity to the marriage vow. Cp. Ex. xxxiv. 15, 16; Deut. xxxi. 16: &c.

40—46. The alternations of chastisement, pardon, restoration, and relapse in the course of Israel's history. As in Neh. ix. 26 ff., the primary reference is to the period of the judges; but doubtless the verses are intended to be a summary survey of the characteristics of the whole course of Israel's history, leading up to the prayer for restoration in *v.* 47.

40. **So Jehovah's anger was kindled against Israel**, a standing formula in the Book of Judges (ii. 14, 20, &c.; cp. Deut. vii. 4; &c.), **and he abhorred his inheritance.**

41. *the heathen*] The nations (R.V.) in contrast to Israel, Jehovah's people.

43. *but they provoked* him &c.] But they were rebellious in their counsel. Self will was their bane, as before (*v.* 13) when they would not wait for Jehovah's counsel. The verbs are frequentative: repeated deliverances were met by repeated rebellion (Judg. ii. 16, 17).

and were brought low] The Heb. verb closely resembles that in Lev. xxvi. 39, "they that are left of you shall *pine away* in their iniquity," and in Ezek. xxiv. 23; xxxiii. 10, passages which were doubtless in the Psalmist's mind. The change may have been intentional, or it may be due to a scribe's error.

45. Cp. Lev. xxvi. 41, 42.

repented] Cp. xc. 13.

46. *He made them also to be pitied* &c.] In answer to Solomon's prayer, 1 Kings viii. 50. Cp. Neh. i. 11; Dan. i. 9.

47 Save us, O LORD our God,
And gather us from among the heathen,
To give thanks unto thy holy name,
And to triumph in thy praise.
48 Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to
everlasting:
And let all the people say, Amen.
Praise ye the LORD.

47. This prayer is the point to which the long confession of national sin, from *v.* 6 onward, has been leading up. 'We have sinned often and grievously; we are bearing the just punishment of our sins. But we confess our guilt; Thy lovingkindness is inexhaustible, once more bring us to our own land, that we may fulfil the purpose of our calling.'

to give thanks &c.] For Jehovah's praise is the end and object of Israel's existence. Cp. Is. xliii. 21; Ps. xxii. 3, note.

48. Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel,
From eternity even to eternity.
And all the people shall say, Amen,
Hallelujah.

The liturgical direction "and all the people shall say, Amen. Hallelujah" seems to imply that the doxology here is not a mere mark of the end of the Fourth Book, but was actually sung at the close of the Psalm. This was the usage in the time of the Chronicler, for in 1 Chr. xvi he prefixes the words, "and say ye," to *vv.* 35, 36 (= *vv.* 47, 48 here), and turns the direction into a statement, "and all the people said, Amen, and praised Jehovah." This doxology then, as Robertson Smith points out (OTJC.[2], p. 196), differs in character from the doxologies at the close of the first three books. It is a part of the Psalm and not an addition by the collector of the Psalter. For the use of similar doxologies cp. 1 Chr. xxx. 10; Neh. ix. 5. It came however to be regarded as marking the end of a fourth book, although Pss. cvi and cvii are closely connected together, and the division of the fourth and fifth books does not correspond to any difference of source or character, as is the case in the other books. Cp. *Introd.* p. liv.

THE PSALMS.

BOOK V.

PSALMS CVII—CL.

PSALM CVII.

THIS Psalm is a call to thanksgiving addressed to the returned exiles, and enforced by various instances of Jehovah's goodness to men in the manifold perils of life.

i. Introduction (1—3). The prayer of cvi. 47 has been answered. Israel has been ransomed from captivity, and brought back from the lands of exile to its own land. The Psalmist calls upon "Jehovah's redeemed ones" to unite in offering to Him the thanksgiving which was contemplated (cvi. 47 *c, d*) as the object of their restoration.

ii. A series of four pictures follows (4—32) vividly representing the goodness of Jehovah in delivering men from the extremity of trouble and danger in answer to their prayers. Each strophe is symmetrically constructed. First there is a description of the sufferers' plight; then their cry for help and its answer; then a call to thanksgiving, supplemented in *vv.* 9, 16 by the reason for it, in *vv.* 22, 32 by an amplification of the appeal. The double refrain with its variations (*vv.* 6—9; 13—16; 19—22; 28—32) is strikingly effective.

1. Travellers through the desert who have lost their way and are on the point of perishing from hunger and thirst are guided to an inhabited city (4—9).

2. Prisoners in the dungeon, or exiles who are like prisoners, suffering the punishment of their transgressions, are released (10—16).

3. Sick men, whose sickness is a chastisement for their sin, are restored to health (17—22).

4. Sailors, all but wrecked in a terrific storm, are brought safe to their destination (23—32).

iii. Here the structure and subject change. The refrains disappear, and in place of the vivid pictures of life we have the Psalmist's reflections on the vicissitudes in the fortunes of countries and of men regarded as a proof of the providential government of the world.

1. Jehovah smites a fruitful land with barrenness for the wickedness of its inhabitants, and transforms a wilderness into a fertile home for the poor and needy (33—38).

2. If they are oppressed He defends them, and confounds their oppressors, to the joy of the righteous, and the discomfiture of the wicked (39—42).

iv. The Psalm ends with an exhortation to mark and ponder such facts as these which are proofs of Jehovah's lovingkindness (43).

The connexion of the central part of the Psalm with the introduction requires some further consideration. The pictures which it contains are scenes from real life, chosen to illustrate God's goodness in answering men's prayers in circumstances of trial and suffering, and to enforce the duty of thanksgiving. But since the Psalm opens with an exhortation to the returned exiles, it can hardly be doubted that they are meant to see in these pictures not only general proofs of God's goodness, but illustrations of their own experience. Israel had been on the point of perishing in the great desert of the world. It had been imprisoned for

its transgressions in the gloomy dungeon of exile, and had lain there crushed and hopeless. It had been sick unto death through its own sin. It had been all but swallowed up in the vast sea of the nations. The scenes are at once fact and figure; scenes from life, yet intended to represent Israel's experience. This is especially clear in *vv.* 10—16, where some touches are obviously national not personal.

The unity of the Psalm has been called in question. It has been suggested that *vv.* 1—3 are an introduction, prefixed to a Psalm of more general import, in order to adapt it for liturgical use: and again that *vv.* 33—43 are an appendix, attached to the original Psalm by a later and inferior poet. The suggestion is plausible but unnecessary. The connexion between the introduction and the main part of the Psalm is intelligible, and the main part of the Psalm is suitable to the circumstances of the returned exiles; while the latter part, if (to our taste) somewhat inferior in form and vigour, offers consolation and encouragement to them in view of the vicissitudes of fortune to which they had been or were likely to be exposed. It has moreover links of connexion in style and language with the earlier part: *v.* 39 for example refers back to *vv.* 4, 5: and the dependence on Job and Is. xl—lxvi, which is a marked feature of the earlier part, is even more noticeable here. It is however curious that *vv.* 23—28 and 40 are to be marked, according to Massoretic tradition, with 'inverted nûns' [i.e. the letter *n*, נ], which are supposed to be the equivalent of brackets, and to mark some dislocation of the text or uncertainty in regard to it. Why *vv.* 23—28 should be so marked is not obvious, but it is not improbable that *vv.* 39 and 40 should be transposed. See Ginsburg, *Introd. to Heb. Bible*, pp. 341 ff.

The Psalm plainly belongs to the post-exilic period, but to what part of it is uncertain. Its tone however would seem to point to the restoration being still comparatively recent.

Notwithstanding the division of the books, it is closely related to the preceding Psalms. Pss. cv, cvi, cvii may be said to form a trilogy. Ps. cv celebrates God's goodness in the choice of Israel and the deliverance from Egypt: Ps. cvi is a confession of Israel's obstinate rebellion against God's purpose for it: Ps. cvii is a call to thanksgiving for its restoration from exile. They refer, broadly speaking, to three successive periods of the national history. The first contains the fulfilment of the promise, "He gave them *the lands of the nations*" (cv. 44): the second contains the warning that "He would scatter them *in the lands*" (cvi. 27); the third relates the restoration, "He gathered them *out of the lands*" (cvii. 3). The refrain of *vv.* 8, 15, 21, 28 is an echo of cvi. 44: with *v.* 2 cp. cvi. 10; with *v.* 21 cp. cvi. 13, 33, 43; with *v.* 20 cp. cv. 19.

107 O give thanks unto the LORD, for *he is* good:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

1—3. An invitation to the returned exiles to join in grateful confession of Jehovah's lovingkindness.

1, 2. The Psalm begins, like Ps. cvi, with the regular liturgical

Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so*, 2
Whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;
And gathered them out of the lands, 3
From the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.

They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; 4

doxology. This "the redeemed of Jehovah" are called to recite (*v.* 2) in grateful acknowledgement of His mercy and in fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy (xxxiii. 11) that there should again be heard in Jerusalem "the voice of them that say, Give thanks to Jehovah of hosts, for Jehovah is good, for his mercy endureth for ever." Cp. cxviii. 1—4.

the redeemed of the LORD] The phrase is taken from Is. lxii. 12 (cp. Is. xxxv. 9. 10; li. 10, 11; lxiii. 4), and clearly denotes the Israelites who had been released from exile in Babylon and elsewhere, and brought home to Jerusalem.

from the hand of the enemy] Rather, from the clutch (lit. *hand*) of adversity. Cp. the use of the same word in *v.* 6 &c. (A.V. *trouble*).

3. *gathered them out of the lands*] In accordance with many a prophetic promise (Jer. xxxii. 37; Ezek. xx. 34; &c.); cp. the prayer of cvi. 47.

from the east &c.] "From the four quarters of the earth," Is. xi. 12; xliii. 5, 6. Israelites from many lands doubtless returned to join the newly-founded community in Jerusalem.

from the south] Heb. *from the sea*, which according to general usage means *the west*. The Targ. explains it to mean 'the southern sea,' the Arabian gulf or the Indian ocean; possibly it may denote the southern part of the Mediterranean, washing the shore of Egypt: but on the whole it seems most probable that the Psalmist borrowed the phrase "from the north and from the sea" from Is. xlix. 12, and does not strictly enumerate the points of the compass. 'The sea' or 'west' there denotes the lands and coasts of the Mediterranean (Is. xi. 11). A slight change of the text, YAMIN for YAM, would give the usual word for *south* (lxxxix. 12), but the text is supported by the Versions.

4—9. First example of Jehovah's lovingkindness to men: the deliverance of travellers who had lost their way in the desert and were on the point of perishing, doubtless a common experience. Cp. Job vi. 18—20.

4. *They wandered* &c.] The subject of the verb is to be supplied, according to a common Hebrew idiom, from the verb itself. We might paraphrase the words 'There were travellers who had lost their way in the desert.' The absence of any expressed subject has led some commentators to connect *vv.* 2. 3 with *v.* 4. But this ruins the symmetry of the Psalm. If *vv.* 1—3 are regarded as a general introduction, each stanza will begin with a description of the plight of the sufferers whose deliverance is subsequently described.

in a solitary way] R.V. in a desert way. But the phrase is a

They found no city to dwell in.
5 Hungry and thirsty,
Their soul fainted in them.
6 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble,
And he delivered them out of their distresses.
7 And he led them forth by the right way,
That *they* might go to a city of habitation.
8 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness,
And *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
9 For he satisfieth the longing soul,
And filleth the hungry soul *with* goodness.

10 Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

questionable one: and it is preferable to follow the LXX and Syr. in reading, *They wandered in the wilderness, in the desert, the way to a city of habitation they found not.*

no city to dwell in] Lit. no city of habitation, a phrase peculiar to this Psalm, *vv.* 7, 36: no inhabited city where they might obtain food and shelter.

5. *fainted*] Was fainting within them: the imperfect tense graphically pictures their plight.

6. The words for *trouble* (better, strait) and *distresses* are coupled together in Job xv. 24.

7. And he guided them in a straight way,
That they might go to a city of habitation.

8 **Let them give thanks to Jehovah for his lovingkindness,**
And for his wonderful works to the sons of men.

The A.V. obliterates the connexion of the refrain with the doxology of *v.* 1, and gives it a wrong turn by generalising its exhortation ('Oh that *men* would praise the Lord'). Here and again in *vv.* 15, 21, 31, the subject of the verb is the men whose deliverance has just been described.

9. Because he satisfied the longing soul,
And the hungry soul he filled with good.

The words refer to the particular case of those who were perishing with hunger and thirst, and do not, primarily at any rate, express a general truth, as the A.V. suggests. The language is derived from Jer. xxxi. 25; Is. xxix. 8 (A.V. 'his soul hath appetite'); lviii. 10, 11; and Lk. i. 53 is a reminiscence of this verse.

10—16. A second example of Divine goodness, in the liberation of prisoners, or captives languishing in the dungeon of exile in punishment for their rebellion against God. The Targ. interprets the passage of Zedekiah and the nobles of Judah in captivity at Babylon.

10. *Such as sit* &c.] Those that sat. The darkness of the dungeon

[1] ὁδὸν πόλεως κατοικητηρίου οὐχ εὗρον, κ.τ.λ. ART Vg.: the singular reading of ℵ ὁδὸν πόλιν printed in Swete's edition (B is here wanting) may however be held to support the Mass. text, if ὁδόν is transferred to the previous line.

Being bound in affliction and iron;
Because they rebelled against the words of God, 11
And contemned the counsel of the most High:
Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; 12
They fell down, and *there was* none to help.
Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, 13
And he saved them out of their distresses.
He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of 14
death,
And brake their bands in sunder.
Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, 15
And *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
For he hath broken the gates of brass, 16
And cut the bars of iron in sunder.

Fools because of their transgression, 17

—ancient prisons were usually unlighted vaults—is a figure for misery, especially the misery of captivity and exile. Cp. Is. ix. 2; xlii. 7; xlix. 9; Mic. vii. 8.

the shadow of death] Or, deathly gloom. Cp. xxiii. 4; xliv. 19.

being *bound* &c.] A reminiscence of Job xxxvi. 8, "If they be bound in fetters, and be taken in the cords of affliction." The whole context, treating of the remedial discipline of affliction, should be compared. Cp. also Ps. cv. 18, "Whose feet they *afflicted*," and "*iron*" = fetters.

11. Their suffering was the punishment of sin. Cp. *vv.* 17, 34. They resisted the commands of God (cvi. 7, 33, 43); and blasphemously doubted or despised the wisdom and the goodness of His purposes for them. Cp. Prov. i. 30; Is. v. 24; and for general illustration, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.

12. So that he subdued their heart with travail. Cp. cvi. 42.

they fell down] Lit. *they stumbled*; figuratively as in cv. 37 (note); Is. iii. 8 (A.V. *is ruined*).

15. Let them give thanks to Jehovah for his lovingkindness,
And for his wonderful works to the sons of men.

16. The prophecy of Is. xlv. 2 has been fulfilled. The land of exile was represented as a vast and strong fortress-prison.

17—22. A third example of Divine goodness, in the restoration of those who have been punished with sickness for their sins, based upon Job xxxiii. 19—26.

17. *Fools*] Many commentators think that some word is needed to express the plight of those whose restoration is to be described, and conjecture that we should read *sick* (חוליים) instead of *fools* (אולים). This emendation gives a good parallelism:—*Those who are sick by*

And because of their iniquities, are afflicted.
18 Their soul abhorreth all *manner of* meat;
And they draw near unto the gates of death.
19 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble,
He saveth them out of their distresses.
20 He sent his word, and healed them,
And delivered *them* from their destructions.
21 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness,
And *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving,
And declare his works with rejoicing.

reason of their course of transgression, and bring affliction on themselves by their iniquities. But the change is unnecessary. The poet looks behind the sickness to the sin which was its cause. *Folly* denotes moral perversity, not mere weakness or ignorance; it leads to ruin. It is the opposite of wisdom, which leads to life. Cp. Prov. i. 7, &c.; Job v. 3. Sickness is commonly regarded in the O. T. as the consequence and punishment of sin. Cp. Ps. xxxviii. 5. That sickness is not necessarily a proof of sin was one of the great lessons taught in the Book of Job.

their transgression] Lit. *the way of their transgression*, implying persistence in evil courses.

are afflicted] The form of the verb conveys the meaning, *bring affliction on themselves.*

18. Their soul loatheth all manner of food,
And they draw nigh unto the gates of death.

Cp. ix. 13; lxxxviii. 3.

For the archaism of E.V. '*And* at death's door,' cp. note on Ps. lxiii. 8.

20. *He sent &c.*] R.V. sendeth, healeth, delivereth. Jehovah's word is here almost personified as a delivering angel. It is His messenger (cxlvii. 15, 18), which performs His will (Is. lv. 11; cp. ix. 8). It is His instrument in His dealings with men (cv. 19) as well as in the work of creation (xxxiii. 6). Such passages prepare the way for the use in the Targums of the periphrasis 'the Word of Jehovah' (*Mêmrâ* or *Dibbûrâ*) for Jehovah in His intercourse with men; and for the fuller revelation of the personal Word, the Logos (John i. 1). In connexion with this thought, it should be noted that in Job xxxiii. 23 the restoration of the sick man to health of mind and body is attributed to the intervention of "an angel, an interpreter" (or mediator).

from their destructions] Lit. *pitfalls* (Lam. iv. 20); the graves into which they had all but fallen. Cp. Job xxxiii. 18, 22, 24, 28; Ps. ciii. 4.

21, 22. Let them give thanks to Jehovah for his lovingkindness,
And for his wonderful works to the sons of men:
And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving,
And tell of his works with glad singing.

Here and in *v.* 32 the call to thanksgiving is amplified, instead of a reason for it being assigned as in *vv.* 9, 16. Cp. Jer. xxxiii. 11.

They that go down to the sea in ships. 23
That do business in great waters;
These see the works of the LORD, 24
And his wonders in the deep.
For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, 25
Which lifteth up the waves thereof.
They mount up *to* the heaven, they go down *again to* 26
the depths:
Their soul is melted because of trouble.
They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken *man*, 27
And are at their wit's end.

23—32 A fourth example of Jehovah's goodness, in the deliverance of sailors caught in a storm. The Targ.[1] refers it to the voyage of Jonah, and some expressions suggest that Jonah i, ii may have been in the poet's mind; but the reference is quite general. Addison (*Spectator*, No. 489) comments on the sublimity of the Psalmist's description of the storm.

23. *They that go down to the sea*] Or, *go down on the sea*; the sea being apparently below the land. Cp. Is. xlii. 10, and the somewhat different use of 'go down' in Jonah i. 3.

that do business in great waters] As merchants and traders, traversing the open sea, and not merely making coasting voyages.

24. *These see* &c.] **These men have seen.** Jehovah's *works* are the storm, viewed as an evidence of His sovereignty over the elements: *His wonders* (or *wonderful works*, as in *v.* 8 &c.) are His miraculous interposition to still the storm and rescue the sailors.

25. *For he commandeth* &c.] **For he spake, and raised** &c. Cp. cv. 31. 34; Gen. i. 3 &c. The P.B.V., *For at his word the stormy wind ariseth* follows the LXX (Vulg.) and Jer. in presuming a different vocalisation of the Heb. consonants, which may possibly be right.

26. *They mount up*] The sailors, not the waves, as is clear from the next line. Cp. Verg. *Aen.* III. 564,

> Tollimur in caelum curvato gurgite, et idem
> Subducta ad Manis imos desedimus unda.

their soul &c.] **Their soul melteth in evil plight.**

27. *and are at their wit's end*] Lit. *all their wisdom is swallowed up*, or perhaps as in lv. 9, *is confounded*. Their skill in navigation entirely fails them. Cp. Is. xix. 3. A striking parallel to the whole passage is to be found in Ovid, *Tristia*, I. 2. 19 ff.

> Me miserum, quanti montes volvuntur aquarum!
> Iam iam tacturos sidera summa putes.
> Quantae diducto subsidunt aequore valles!
> Iam iam tacturas Tartara nigra putes.
> Rector in incerto est, nec quid fugiatve petatve
> Invenit. Ambiguis ars stupet ipsa malis.

[1] Ed. Lagarde. The text in Walton's Polyglott does not contain the gloss.

28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble,
And he bringeth them out of their distresses.
29 He maketh the storm a calm,
So that the waves thereof are still.
30 Then are they glad because they be quiet;
So he bringeth them unto their desired haven.
31 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness,
And *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
32 Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people.
And praise him in the assembly of the elders.

33 He turneth rivers into a wilderness,
And the watersprings into dry ground;

28. Kay quotes a Basque proverb, "Let him who knows not how to pray go to sea."

he bringeth them &c.] Cp. xxv. 17.

30. *because they be quiet*] Because the waves are calmed. Cp. Jonah i. 11.

unto their desired haven] Lit. *the haven*, or possibly, *the mart, of their desire*. The word *māchōz*, which occurs here only, is rendered *harbour* by the Ancient Versions, but in the Talmud it means *town*. The destination of the sailors, where they intend to dispose of their wares, is obviously meant. The R.V. has wisely restored Coverdale's musical phrase, **the haven where they would be.**

31. Let them give thanks to Jehovah for his lovingkindness,
And for his wonderful works to the sons of men:
32. Yea, let them exalt him in the assembly of the people,
And praise him in the session of the elders.

Let them publicly declare His praises in the temple and in the forum, where the congregation is assembled for worship (xxii. 22, 25), and where the rulers of the people sit in council.

33—43. The style of the Psalm changes, and its subject becomes more general. The refrain disappears, and instead of examples of God's goodness in delivering various classes of men, we have proofs of His providential government of the world in the vicissitudes of countries and peoples.

33—38. Fertile lands are smitten with barrenness for the wickedness of their inhabitants: barren lands are transformed into a fruitful home for the poor and needy.

33. *He turneth*] **He hath turned.** The verbs in *vv.* 33—41 should be translated by the past tense, as referring to facts of experience, not merely to general truths. The Targ. refers *vv.* 33, 34 to the drought in the time of Joel.

into dry ground] R.V. into a thirsty ground. *v.* 33 *a* is from Is. l. 2; with 33 *b* cp. Is. xxxv. 7: *v.* 35 is from Is. xli. 18.

A fruitful land into barrenness, 34
For the wickedness of them that dwell therein.
He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, 35
And dry ground into waterspringS;
And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, 36
That they may prepare a city for habitation;
And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, 37
Which may yield fruits of increase.
He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied 38
greatly;
And suffereth not their cattle to decrease.
Again, they are minished and brought low 39
Through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.
He poureth contempt upon princes, 40
And causeth them to wander in the wilderness, *where there is* no way.
Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, 41

34. *barrenness*] A salt desert (Jer. xvii. 6) like Sodom and Gomorrha, Deut. xxix. 23.

35. He hath turned a wilderness into a pool of water, and a dry land into watersprings:
36. And there he hath made the hungry to dwell,
And they have founded an inhabited city,
37. And sowed fields and planted vineyards,
Which yielded fruitful produce.

With *v.* 36 cp. *vv.* 4, 5. In *v.* 37 the R.V. *and get them fruits* is possible, but not in accordance with the general usage of the phrase.

38. In this and the preceding verse there may be an allusion to Lev. xxvi. 20, 22.

39—42. Though trouble may come, Jehovah scatters their oppressors and defends them, to the joy of the righteous and the chagrin of the wicked.

39. And when they were diminished and brought low,
Through oppression, evil, and sorrow,
40. "He poureth contempt upon princes,
And maketh them wander in a wayless waste,"
41. And he set the needy on high from affliction,
And made him families like a flock.

There is no change of subject. The Psalmist is following the fortunes of those whom Jehovah has blessed with prosperity. Temporary reverses may happen to them, but He will not fail them in their need. *v.* 39 is virtually the protasis to *v.* 40, and the construction of *v.* 40 is somewhat awkward, because it is a verbatim quotation from Job xii. 21 *a*, 24 *b*, which the Psalmist has adopted without alteration.

And maketh *him* families like a flock.
42 The righteous shall see *it*, and rejoice:
And all iniquity shall stop her mouth.
43 Whoso *is* wise, and will observe these *things*,
Even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.

The princes are any tyrannous oppressors; God humbles their pride and confounds their counsels. The Psalmist probably has in mind the troubles of the returned exiles, and intends his words to encourage their faith. [The construction would however be simplified by placing *v.* 40 before *v.* 39 (see above p. 638), thus: *He poureth contempt upon princes... and they are diminished and brought low, and he setteth &c.* He humbles the proud and exalts the humble.]

like a flock] i.e. numerous. Cp. Job xxi. 11; Ezek. xxxvi. 37, 38.

The P.B.V. of *v.* 40, "Though he suffer them to be evil intreated through tyrants, and let them wander out of the way in the wilderness," comes from Coverdale, who derived it apparently from the Zürich Bible[1] (*Introd.* p. lxxiii). The Heb. however cannot bear this meaning.

42. The upright see and are glad;
And all unrighteousness stoppeth her mouth.

All mockery of Israel and blasphemy of Israel's God are silenced. Cp. cxv. 2. The first line is from Job xxii. 19; the second from Job v. 16.

43. Whoso is wise, let him observe these things,
And let them consider the lovingkindnesses of Jehovah.

Cp. Hos. xiv. 9. In such examples as these the wise man will discern the methods of Jehovah's providential dealings with men.

PSALM CVIII.

The first part of this Psalm (*vv.* 1—5) is an enthusiastic utterance of adoration and thanksgiving, taken from Ps. lvii. 7—11. The second part (*vv.* 6—13) is taken from Ps. lx. 5—12. It is an appeal for help against Israel's enemies, grounded upon God's promise to apportion the land to His people, and give them dominion over the neighbouring nations.

Doubtless it was for liturgical use that these two fragments of older poems were combined into a new hymn. But at what time or under what circumstances this was done can only be conjectured. Apparently Israel was threatened by enemies, and the second part of Ps. lx was felt to be an appropriate prayer for their needs. But the complaint of severe disaster with which that Psalm opens was not appropriate, and accordingly a thanksgiving was substituted for it. It seems natural to connect this thanksgiving with the repeated calls to thanksgiving in the preceding

[1] So er sy lasst durch die tyrannen beraubet und geschediget werden: so er sy durch die öden ort, da kein weg ist, hārumb fürt.

Psalms (cv. 1 ff.; cvi. 1, 47; cvii. 1); and the prayer of the second part may have been prompted by some attack or threatened attack on the part of Edom or some other neighbouring nation upon the weak community of the Restoration. The old words of praise and prayer with their historical associations were adapted to new needs. Jehovah had restored His people to their home; thanksgiving for this proof of His lovingkindness and truth was their first duty: but they were exposed to the attacks of envious and malicious neighbours, and His aid was needed to maintain them in secure possession of the land.

Some such thought—apart from the obvious application of *v.* 5—seems to have dictated the choice of this Psalm as a Proper Psalm for Ascension Day. On that day adoration and thanksgiving for Christ's triumph are fitly joined with prayer that He will put forth His power to give His Church the victory over her spiritual enemies.

This Psalm is of interest as proving that no scruple was felt in combining portions of other Psalms for liturgical purposes, and in prefixing to the new composition the title *A Psalm of David* which those Psalms bore. It justifies the assumption upon internal evidence that other Psalms (e.g. Ps. xix) are of composite origin.

Further it is to be noted that the revision of the second main division of the Psalter by the Elohistic editor (*Introd.* p. lv f.) must have preceded the compilation of this Psalm. Pss. lvii and lx were obviously in the compiler's hands in their 'Elohistic' form, for in its use of *Elohim*, 'God,' instead of *Jehovah* this Psalm forms a conspicuous exception to the regular usage of Book v.

A Song *or* Psalm of David.

O God, my heart is fixed; 108
I will sing and give praise,
Even *with* my glory.

1—5. Resolutions of joyous thanksgiving for past mercies, and prayer that God will manifest Himself as the supremely exalted Ruler of the world.

1. My heart is fixed, O God;
I will sing and make melody, yea with my glory.

The Psalmist's stedfast will and purpose is to sing God's praises. Cp. li. 10; cxii. 7; Col. i. 23. In Ps. lvii. 7 *my heart is fixed* is repeated at the end of the first line, and *v.* 8 begins *Awake my glory*. This figure of 'epizeuxis' or emphatic repetition of words is characteristic of Ps. lvii (*vv.* 1, 3, 7, 8), and the poetical effect is much impaired by the abridgement. *Yea my glory* is grammatically in apposition to *I*:—I, yea my soul, the noblest part of me, the image of the divine glory, will sing &c. It is however possible that *also my glory* is a gloss added by some scribe or reader from Ps. lvii. The LXX has added ἑτοίμη ἡ καρδία μου to the first line as in Ps. lvii.[1]; hence, through the Vulg., the P.B.V.

[1] Some MSS add ἐξεγέρθητι ἡ δόξα μου, 'awake up my glory' at the end of the verse; and throughout the Ps the MSS of the LXX give instructive examples of the tendency of scribes to assimilate parallel texts.

2 Awake, psaltery and harp:
I *myself* will awake early.
3 I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people:
And I will sing *praises* unto thee among the nations.
4 For thy mercy *is* great above the heavens:
And thy truth *reacheth* unto the clouds.
5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens:
And thy glory above all the earth.

6 That thy beloved may be delivered;

has the repeated *my heart is ready*. The paraphrase of P.B.V. *with the best member that I have* (Great Bible, not Coverdale) is from Münster, *etiam digniori membro meo*.

2. *Awake, psaltery and harp*] There is a special fitness in the call, if this Psalm was compiled at a time when the harp of Israel had long been mute in the Exile (cxxxvii. 2).

I myself *will awake early*] Better, as R.V. marg. I will awake the dawn. A bold and beautiful poetical figure. The dawn is often personified (Job xli. 18; Ps. cxxxix. 9). Usually it is the dawn that awakes men; the Psalmist will awake the dawn by his praises before daybreak.

3. I will give thanks unto thee, Jehovah, among the peoples:
And I will make melody unto thee among the nations.

Jehovah (A.V. *LORD*) takes the place of *Adonai* (A.V. *Lord*) of the 'Elohistic' Ps. lvii. 9. Again the old words would have special significance for the returned Israelites. Jehovah had wrought salvation for them "in the sight of the nations" (xcviii. 2, 3), and therefore they were to publish His praise among them (xcvi. 3; cv. 1).

4. For thy lovingkindness is great above the heavens,
And thy truth (reacheth) unto the skies.

This verse gives the reason for the praises which he purposes to offer. Once more God's lovingkindness and truth had been attested by the deliverance of Israel from exile. Cp. xcviii. 3. The change of '*unto* the heavens' into '*above* the heavens' is a loss to the sense, making the second line an anticlimax.

5. *Be thou exalted*] Or, Exalt thyself. Cp. xxi. 13; xlvi. 10. God *is* exalted in majesty (Is. vi. 1); what is needed is that He should manifest His supreme authority (Is. ii. 11 ff.). This verse (the refrain of Ps. lvii, *vv.* 5, 11) forms a fitting transition to the second part of the Psalm, with its prayer for deliverance and expressions of confidence in the help of God.

6—13. Prayer for help, based upon God's promise to give Israel possession of Canaan, and supremacy over the surrounding nations (6—9): with an expression of confidence that God, Who alone can help, will surely give His people the victory (10—13).

6. The A.V. places a semicolon at the end of *v.* 5, but here, as in lx. 5, it is best to take the clause *That thy beloved* ones *may be delivered*

Save *with* thy right hand, and answer me.
God hath spoken in his holiness; 7
I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem,
And mete out the valley of Succoth.
Gilead *is* mine; Manasseh *is* mine; 8
Ephraim also *is* the strength of mine head;

as dependent on the next clause *Save* &c. *Thy beloved ones* are the Israelites. Cp. Deut. xxxiii. 12; Jer. xi. 15.

save with thy right hand] Give victory. Cp. *v.* 12 *b*; xliv. 3.

answer me] So the best text here, supported by all the Versions. This reading suits the singular of *vv.* 1—5 better than *save us*, which is found in some MSS and adopted by R.V.

7. *in his holiness*] Or, by his holiness. for 'spoken' is the equivalent of 'promised' or 'sworn.' Cp. lxxxix. 35; Am. iv. 2. God's 'holiness' includes His whole essential nature in its moral aspect, and that nature makes it impossible for Him to break His promise (Num. xxiii. 19; Tit. i. 2). It is equivalent to 'Himself' (Am. vi. 8; Heb. vi. 13, 17, 18). *In his sanctuary* (cp. lxiii. 2) is a possible but less probable rendering.

I will rejoice] Better as R.V., I will exult. God is the speaker. The language is bold, but not bolder than that of Is. lxiii. 1 ff. God is represented as a victorious warrior, conquering the land, and portioning it out to His people. He makes Ephraim the chief defence of His kingdom, and Judah the seat of government, while surrounding nations are treated as vassals. It is possible that the original Psalmist was quoting some actual oracle, but more probably he was reproducing freely in poetical form the drift of the great promise to David (2 Sam. vii. 9, 10). Cp. ii. 7; lxxxix. 19. Though the words in their full meaning could no longer be applicable to the community of the Restoration, they would serve as an assurance of God's purpose to establish them once more securely in His own land.

Shechem...the valley of Succoth] Shechem, as a central place of importance, represents the territory west of the Jordan; Succoth, 'in the vale' (Josh. xiii. 27), somewhere to the south of the Jabbok, between Peniel and the Jordan, represents the territory east of the Jordan. These two places in particular may be named, because of their connexion with the history of Jacob, who halted first at Succoth and then at Shechem, when he returned to Canaan (Gen. xxxiii. 17, 18). God will fulfil His promise to Jacob, apportioning to His people the land in which their great ancestor settled.

8. *Gilead* and *Manasseh*, i.e. the land of Bashan in which half the tribe of Manasseh settled, stand for the territory east of the Jordan and the tribes settled there: *Ephraim* and *Judah* stand for the tribes west of the Jordan. God claims all as His own: therefore all can claim God's protection.

Ephraim &c.] Render with R.V.,

Ephraim also is the defence of mine head;
Judah is my sceptre.

Judah *is* my lawgiver;
9 Moab *is* my washpot;
Over Edom will I cast out my shoe;
Over Philistia will I triumph.

10 Who will bring me *into* the strong city?
Who will lead me into Edom?
11 *Wilt* not *thou*, O God, *who* hast cast us off?

Ephraim, as the most powerful tribe and the chief defence of the nation, is compared to the warrior's helmet: Judah, as the tribe to which belonged the Davidic sovereignty, is compared to the royal sceptre, or, as the same word is rendered in R.V. of Gen. xlix. 10, to which the present passage alludes, 'the ruler's staff.'

9. The neighbouring nations are reduced to servitude. In striking contrast to the honour assigned to Ephraim and Judah is the disgrace of Moab and Edom. Moab, notorious for its pride (Is. xvi. 6), is compared to the vessel which is brought to the victorious warrior to wash his feet in when he returns from battle. The old enemy of God and His people is degraded to do menial service: in other words, it becomes a subject and a vassal.

In close connexion with this metaphor the next line may be rendered, **Unto Edom will I cast my shoe**. Edom is like the slave to whom the warrior flings his sandals to carry or to clean. Haughty and defiant Edom (Obad. 3, 4) must perform the duty of the lowest slave (cp. Matt. iii. 11). The R.V. renders, **Upon Edom will I cast my shoe.** This would mean, 'I will take possession of Edom,' in allusion to an oriental custom of taking possession of land by casting the shoe upon it; but the first explanation agrees best with the context.

over Philistia will I triumph] Or, **will I shout in triumph**. This reading gives a good and simple sense, and may possibly be the original reading. For the various explanations of the difficult text in Ps. lx. 8, *shout thou because of me*, see note there. The LXX has the same rendering in both places, ἐμοὶ (οἱ) ἀλλόφυλοι ὑπετάγησαν, 'unto me the aliens are subjected.'

10. into *the strong city*] *Into the* **fortified** *city*, a different word from that in lx. 9, though with similar meaning. Probably Sela or Petra, the capital of Edom, famous for its inaccessibility (Obad. 3), was meant in the original Psalm.

who will lead me into Edom?] The verb is in the perfect tense, and the R.V. renders, *Who hath led me into Edom?* But such a reference to some previous successful invasion does not suit the context. The Ancient Versions all render by the future, and the perfect is sometimes used in questions in Hebrew to express difficulty or hopelessness. 'Who,' it implies, 'could lead me right into (the preposition is emphatic) Edom? The obstacles are apparently insuperable.' See Driver, *Tenses*, § 19.

11. The emphatic THOU of lx. 10 is omitted here. Two renderings

And wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts?
Give us help from trouble:
For vain *is* the help of man.
Through God we shall do valiantly:
For he *it is that* shall tread down our enemies.

are possible, that of the A.V., which is that of the LXX and Jer., and that of the R.V., which is substantially that of the Syr. and Targ.;

Hast not thou cast us off, O God?
And thou goest not forth, O God, with our hosts.

The first suits the context better as the answer to *v.* 10 in a tone of confidence which corresponds to that of *v.* 13. Though God has for the moment deserted us, He will now give us help, for we trust in Him alone. The second rendering introduces a note of despair, which does not seem to harmonise with the confidence of *v.* 13. With it the connexion of thought would be, Who can lead us into the enemy's stronghold? None but God, and God has deserted us. Yet even now perhaps He will hear our prayer. With the second line cp. xliv. 9.

12. *from trouble*] Or, as R.V., **against the adversary**. Cp. *v.* 13.

for vain is the help of man] Lit. *salvation*. Cp. *v.* 6. It is a delusion (cp. xxxiii. 17) to look to human strength for victory. See xliv. 6, 7; 1 Sam. xvii. 47; Jer. xvii. 5; and cp. Judg. vii. 4, 7; 1 Sam. xiv. 6; 2 Chron. xiv. 11; 1 Macc. iii. 16 ff.

13. *Through God*] Cp. lvi. 4.

we shall do valiantly] Cp. Num. xxiv. 18; Ps. cxviii. 15, 16.

shall tread down our enemies] Cp. xliv. 5; xviii. 42, note. R.V. **adversaries**, cp. *v.* 11.

PSALM CIX.

i. The Psalmist appeals for help against a gang of merciless enemies, who are endeavouring to effect his ruin by false accusations or treacherous slanders. Their hostility is not merely causeless: it is a deliberate return of evil for good, of hate for love (1—5).

ii. Singling out the leader of his persecutors the Psalmist invokes upon him and all that belong to him the retribution which his inhuman conduct deserves. May he be tried and found guilty! May he be degraded from his office and die a premature death! May his children be impoverished and his name speedily become extinct! May all the sins of his ancestors be remembered against him! Because he has deliberately been merciless to the poor and weak, and chosen not to benefit but to injure his neighbour, let him find no mercy or blessing at the hands of God (6—20).

iii. Then, changing his tone, the Psalmist prays once more for help, pleading the pitiableness of his own plight (21—25); and his prayer rises into a confident anticipation of ultimate deliverance, and con-

sequent thanksgiving to Jehovah the champion of the poor and needy (26—31).

Thus the Psalm consists of six stanzas, each of five verses, except the last, which contains six, and falls into three divisions.

Commentators who maintain the Davidic authorship, have supposed it to refer to Doeg, or Ahithophel, or Shimei. But there is nothing in the Psalm to indicate that its writer was ever in a position of authority: rather he seems to belong to the class of the poor and oppressed, and to be the victim of a conspiracy of unscrupulous neighbours. Some features in the language point to a late date, and apparently there are allusions to the Book of Job, and to late Psalms, e.g. Ps. cii. Most probably it belongs to the post-exilic period.

It has been held by some that the Psalm is not personal but national; that the speaker is Israel, persecuted and oppressed by scornful and malignant enemies. Others have supposed that the Psalmist writes as the representative of the poor and oppressed classes, and that the enemy whom he denounces is no particular individual, but the typical persecutor of the poor. But alike in its denunciations and in its complaints and in its prayers the Psalm has a personal ring: it is a cry of suffering wrung out by actual circumstances. What these circumstances were we can only conjecture. Possibly the enemy whom he singles out had been the head of a conspiracy to ruin him and his family by false charges and perversion of justice. Such a situation may be indicated by the language of *vv.* 2, 3 (cp. *v.* 31), and it would give special point to the form of retribution which the Psalmist invokes in *vv.* 6 ff. His enemies were evidently of his own countrymen, and the chief enemy was a man of some position (*v.* 8). Was he some noble whom the judge would be ready to gratify, or even the judge himself? Cp. Mic. vii. 3. The narrative in Neh. v shews that national suffering had not taught the wealthier and more powerful members of the community of the Return to exercise consideration towards their poorer brethren. Possibly, though less probably, the Psalmist's enemies were men who had been attempting to ruin him by slander and calumny, such as almost proved fatal to Jesus the son of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus li. 1—10).

The Psalm has much in common with Pss. xxxv and lxix. The complaints of the *causelessness* of the hostility of his enemies resemble those in xxxv. 11 ff.: the imprecations recall those of lxix. 22 ff., but they are more terrible in their detail, and they startle and shock the Christian reader the more because they are levelled not at the guilty man himself alone, but at all his kith and kin.

The moral difficulty of the Imprecatory Psalms has been discussed generally in the *Introduction*, pp. lxxxviii ff. We shall not attempt to justify them. They are the very opposite of the spirit of the Gospel (Matt. v. 43 ff.). But we must endeavour to understand them. They are the expression of the spirit of a dispensation, in which retribution was a fundamental principle. It is the desire for retribution, above all for retribution for gratuitous malice, which finds such passionate expression here. "As he hath done, so shall it be done to him" was the sentence of the Law (Lev. xxiv. 19). "Let me see thy vengeance on them" is the prayer of the persecuted prophet (Jer. xi. 20). "Whoso

rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house" was the maxim of the Wise men in Israel (Prov. xvii. 13). 'Let it be so in the case of my enemy' is the sum and substance of the Psalmist's prayer. 'My enemies have rewarded me evil for good, and plotted to ruin me. Let the evil they have been devising recoil upon the head of the author of the plot. I am innocent; he is guilty: the fate which he would unjustly have assigned to me will justly be his.' Again, the Psalmist is Jehovah's servant (*v.* 28); his cause is Jehovah's cause; if he perishes, Jehovah's honour will suffer (*v.* 21); and his deliverance seems inevitably to involve the destruction of his implacable enemies. Let it be remembered too that we are dealing with poetry, and with the language of burning indignation kindled by cruel wrong. The ruin which the Psalmist imprecates upon the wicked man is doubtless that which he conceives the wicked man had designed to inflict on him.

But there is another side to the Psalmist's character. He is capable of the tenderest love and deepest devotion. He would rather love than hate, rather bless than curse. In this respect the Psalm presents a striking contrast to the Fourth Psalm of Solomon, "Against the men-pleasers," which has been quoted as a parallel. That Psalm is a Pharisaic attack upon the Sadducees, and breathes a spirit of rancorous and bitter religious hatred. Comp. *vv.* 16—25 in Ryle and James' translation.

"Let dishonour be his portion, O LORD, in thy sight;
Let his going out be with groaning, and his coming in with a curse;
Let his life, O LORD, be spent in pain, in poverty and want:
Let his sleep be in anguish and his awaking in perplexities.
Let sleep be withdrawn from his eyelids in the night-season;
Let him miscarry with dishonour in every work of his hands;
Let him enter his house empty-handed;
And let his house lack everything wherewith he can satisfy his desire.
Let his old age be childless and solitary until the time of his being taken away.
Let the flesh of the men pleasers be torn in pieces by the beasts of the field,
And the bones of transgressors lie dishonoured in the sight of the sun.
Let ravens peck out the eyes of the men that work hypocrisy,
Because they have made desolate with dishonour many men's houses, and scattered them in their lust;
And remembered not God, nor feared God in all these things;
And provoked God to anger and vexed him;
That he should cut them off from the earth, because with craftiness they beguiled the souls of the innocent."

It has been maintained by some commentators that in this Psalm, as in Ps. lxix, the imprecations are not the imprecations of the Psalmist upon his enemies, but those of his enemies upon him, which he quotes. We are to supply *saying* at the end of *v.* 5, and to explain *v.* 20 to mean, 'This is mine adversaries' award unto me: this is the sentence that they would procure against me from Jehovah.' This view has been

advocated by Dr Taylor (*Gospel in the Law*, pp. 244 ff.), and more recently by Dr Sharpe (*Student's Handbook to the Psalms*, pp. 218 ff.). At first sight it is attractive. It accounts for the sudden change of tone and for the transition from the plural to the singular in *vv.* 6 ff. It removes the moral difficulty. But it must be acknowledged that it is a somewhat strained and artificial interpretation. The sudden changes of feeling, and the abrupt transition from the plural to the singular, marking out one of the band of enemies as their leader and representative, find a complete parallel in Ps. lv. If the moral difficulty were removed in this particular case, it would still remain in other Psalms; and in fact the denunciations are not more terrible than those of Jeremiah against his persecutors (see Jer. xi. 18 ff.; xv. 15 ff.; xvii. 18; xviii. 19 ff.; xx. 11 ff.); while the combination of fierce emotion with elegiac tenderness finds a complete analogy in the character of that martyr-prophet.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

109 Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise;
2 For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me:
They have spoken against me *with* a lying tongue.

1—5. The Psalmist appeals to God to interpose and defend him from his persecutors, whose hostility is not only causeless, but aggravated by gross ingratitude.

1. *Hold not thy peace*] Or, Be not silent, but answer my prayers by pronouncing and executing judgement upon my persecutors. Cp. xxxv. 22; xxxix. 12; l. 3; lxxxiii. 1. God's silence is contrasted with the noisy clamour of his foes.

O God of my praise[1]] Thou, Who art the object of my praise, Whom I have had cause to praise in times past, leave me not without cause to praise thee now. Cp. *v.* 30; xxii. 25; and particularly Jeremiah's prayer (xvii. 14) "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me and I shall be saved; for thou art my praise," based on Deut. x. 21.

2. For a wicked man's mouth, yea a mouth of deceit, have they opened against me:
They have spoken with me with a tongue of falsehood.

It would be easy to smooth the style of the first line by reading 'a mouth of *wickedness*' for '*a wicked man's mouth*'; it is only a question of vowel points in the Heb.: but the Versions support the reading of the Massoretic text, and it points at once to the leader of the gang, who has been set on by his fellows to compass the Psalmist's ruin. The phrase *they have spoken with me* (R.V. *to me*, marg. *against*

[1] In most editions of the Prayer Book the Latin heading is wrongly given as *Deus laudum*, which appears to have been introduced as a rendering of this phrase, the proper heading *Deus laudem* [meam ne tacueris]; 'O God, pass not over my praise in silence', seeming to be unintelligible.

They compassed me about also *with* words of hatred; 3
And fought against me without a cause.
For my love they are my adversaries: 4
But I *give myself unto* prayer.
And they have rewarded me evil for good 5
And hatred for my love.

me) seems to be used in a forensic sense as in cxxvii. 5. His enemies—there is no need to explain to God who are meant by 'they'—are scheming to effect his ruin by groundless charges supported by false witness. The word for *falsehood* is that used in Ex. xx. 16, and frequently in Proverbs (vi. 19, &c.) of false witness.

3. Yea, with words of hatred have they surrounded me,
And fought against me without cause.

Cp. xxxv. 7, 19, 20; lxix. 4; Prov. i. 11.

"Come and let us smite him with the tongue" was the cry of Jeremiah's opponents (xviii. 18). "Denounce, yea, let us denounce him" (xx. 10).

4. In return for my love they behave as adversaries unto me,
Though I (gave myself unto) prayer.

Their hostility is not merely gratuitous (*v.* 3); it is an actual return of evil for good. The Heb. word for 'adversaries' is characteristic of this Psalm, *vv.* 20, 29; cp. *v.* 6: elsewhere in the Psalter only in xxxviii. 20; lxxi. 13. It may mean not 'enemies' in general, but 'accusers,' opponents in a court of law. For the forcible idiom *I* (*was*) *prayer* cp. cxx. 7, "I am peace"; cx. 3, "Thy people are freewill offerings." The A.V., *But I* give myself unto *prayer*, retained in R.V., takes the meaning to be that in his need he commits his cause to God (cp. lxix. 13). But the parallel passage in xxxv. 13 is decidedly in favour of supposing that his prayers for them in past times are meant, and this explanation suits the context best. To these prayers he refers as the proof of his love, the good for which they are now (*v.* 5) requiting him with evil.

5. *they have rewarded me* &c.] Lit. *they have laid evil upon me in return for good.* Cp. xxxv. 12; xxxviii. 20; Jer. xviii. 20.

6—20. The thought of the enormity of this ingratitude overmasters the Psalmist. He breaks out suddenly into a passionate prayer that due retribution may fall upon the chief offender. May the ruin he was planning for another overtake himself!

The singular ('over *him*' &c.), which now takes the place of the plural, may be collective, the Psalmist's enemies being regarded as a whole; or distributive, each one of the mass being singled out: but more probably it fastens upon the leader of the gang (*v.* 2) upon whom rests the real guilt. Cp. for the sudden transition lv. 12 ff., 20 ff.

6, 7. Let this heartless persecutor of the innocent be put upon his trial, and that before a judge as heartless, and with a malicious accuser as unscrupulous, as himself: let him be found guilty, and let his cry for mercy find no hearing.

6 Set thou a wicked *man* over him:
And let Satan stand at his right hand.
7 When he shall be judged, let him be condemned:
And let his prayer become sin.
8 Let his days be few;
And let another take his office.
9 Let his children be fatherless,
And his wife a widow.

6. *Set thou*] appoint. He is himself in office (v. 8, a cognate word, 'appointment'), but let him be called to account before superior authority.

Satan] Rather an adversary, or, an accuser, for evidently it is a human tribunal before which he is to be summoned, not, as in Zech. iii. 1, the bar of heaven. The word comes from the same root as *adversary* in vv. 4. 20. 29. We may infer from Zech. iii. 1 that it was customary for the accuser to stand on the right hand of the accused in the court.

7. When he is judged, he shall come out guilty] Lit. *wicked*: he will be shewn to be what he is and condemned accordingly. Cp. xxxvii. 32.

and his prayer shall be held as a sin] This cannot mean that his plea to the judge or to his accuser (Matt. xviii. 26) will be regarded as an aggravation of his offence, for the word for prayer is never used of requests made to men; but that when he cries to God for help, his prayer will only be regarded as a sin and find no hearing. Terrible as this statement is, it is only in accord with the teaching of many other passages. See lxvi. 18 ff.; Prov. i. 28 ff.; xv. 8; xxi. 27; xxviii. 9; Is. i. 15. A prayer, wrung from the wicked man in his extremity, and prompted by no true penitence, would only be an appeal to God to take the part of the wicked, to the confusion of the moral order of the world. The Versions and commentators generally ignore the fact that the verb in the second line is not in the optative (passive) form *let it be held*, but a simple future (imperfect), *it shall be held*: and presumably the verb in the first line is also to be translated as a future not an optative, though in this case no distinctive form exists.

8. Let his life come prematurely to an end (xxxvii. 35, 36; lv. 23), and let another man succeed him in his post of authority: or perhaps, let his life be short and withal dishonoured by degradation from his office. Cp. Is. xxii. 19 ff. The rendering *let another take his store* is less probable.

The second clause is quoted together with lxix. 25 in Acts i. 20. Judas was the antitype of the man who requited love with treachery, and the words of Scripture are appealed to as a solemn sanction for filling up his office by the election of another Apostle.

9, 10. The curse of his misdeeds falls even upon his wife and children. This is the climax of awfulness in the imprecation. But a man's family was regarded as part of himself; his punishment was not complete unless they were included in it; and for full retribution they

Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: 10
Let them seek *their bread* also out of their desolate places.
Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; 11
And let the strangers spoil his labour.
Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: 12
Neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children.
Let his posterity be cut off; 13
And in the generation following let their name be blotted out.
Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD; 14
And let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.
Let them be before the LORD continually, 15
That he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.

must share his ruin, for doubtless, this man's schemes, if successful, would have involved the ruin of the Psalmist's family. See *Introd.* § xcii.

10. *let them seek* &c.] And seek (their bread) far from their ruined home. Let the wicked man's home become a ruin, and his children have to get their living away from it. The LXX however points to the reading, *and let them be driven out of their ruined home.*

11. **Let a creditor ensnare all that he hath,**
And let foreigners plunder his labour.

Ensnare is a graphic word for the wily schemes by which an unscrupulous creditor or usurious money-lender would contrive to get possession of all a man's property. For examples of the destitution to which Israelites were sometimes brought by creditors see 2 Kings iv. 1 ff.; Neh. v. 1—7.

12. Let him have none to continue lovingkindness to him as represented in his children; nor any one to have pity on his orphans.

13. Cp. xxxvii. 28, 38; Job xviii. 13—21. May his sons die childless, and in the next generation their name be removed from the register of citizens. Cp. xxix. 28. An Israelite, with his strong sense of family solidarity, looked forward to living on in his descendants; and the extinction of the family was contemplated as the most terrible of calamities. P.B.V. '*his* name,' follows the Vulg. from the LXX.

14, 15. Let the full penalty for the sins of his ancestors be exacted from him, in accordance with the warning of the law, that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. See Ex. xx. 5; cp. Matt. xxiii. 32—36.

14. *be blotted out*] From God's book in which it is recorded as a debt. Cp. li. 1.

15. *Let them be*] The iniquity and sin. Cp. xc. 8; Lam. i. 22.

the memory of them] Of his ancestors and all their posterity. Cp. xxxiv. 16.

16 Because that he remembered not to shew mercy,
But persecuted the poor and needy man,
That *he* might even slay the broken in heart.
17 As he loved cursing, so let it come *unto* him:
As he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.
18 As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment,
So let it come into his bowels like water,
And like oil into his bones.
19 Let it be unto him as the garment *which* covereth *him*,
And for a girdle where*with* he is girded continually.

16—20. This curse is deserved: it is the just retribution for his deliberate choice of evil.

16. **Because he remembered not to do lovingkindness,**
But persecuted the afflicted and needy man,
And him that was cowed in heart, to do them to death.

He took no thought of the constant teaching of prophets (Hos. vi. 6; Mic. vi. 8) and wise men (Prov. xi. 17). The poor and downhearted and spiritless, men such as the Psalmist represents himself to be (*v.* 22), were his victims.

17. **And he loved cursing, and it came to him;**
And delighted not in blessing, and it was far from him:
18. **And he clad himself with cursing as with his robe,**
And it came into his inward parts like water, and like oil into his bones:
19. **(So) let it be unto him as the garment in which he wraps himself,**
And as the belt wherewith he girds himself continually.

As the text stands, the verbs in *vv.* 17, 18 cannot be rendered as optatives, *let it come...let it be far...let it come.* At first sight it is tempting to make the slight change in vocalisation which would give this sense (cp. LXX and Jer.); but the text admits of a good explanation. The past tenses *it came...it was far...it came* are not to be explained as 'futures of certainty,' water and oil (possibly with a reference to the water of jealousy, Num. v. 22) being regarded as figures for what will inevitably penetrate his whole body. Water and oil naturally denote what is refreshing and strengthening (Job xv. 16; xxxiv. 7; Prov. iii. 8). The wicked man deliberately chose the policy of cursing, and welcomed it to a home in his heart; he banished blessing from his thoughts and purposes. Cursing became the habit of mind, which he assumed each day as naturally as his garment: it was a positive refreshment and invigoration of his whole being. Therefore let it cleave inseparably to him and let him never be able to free himself from it. Let it cling to him like a Nessus-shirt of venom.

Let this *be* the reward of mine adversaries from the 20
LORD,
And of them that speak evil against my soul.

But do thou for me, O GOD the Lord, for thy name's 21
sake:
Because thy mercy *is* good, deliver thou me.
For I *am* poor and needy, 22
And my heart is wounded within me.
I am gone like the shadow when it declineth: 23
I am tossed up and down as the locust.
My knees are weak through fasting; 24
And my flesh faileth of fatness.
I became also a reproach unto them: 25
When they looked upon me they shaked their heads.

20. Let *this* be *the reward*] Or as R.V., **This** (is) **the reward**; the wages, as the word implies, which they have earned by their behaviour.
adversaries] See note on *v.* 4.

21—25. From the pitilessness of man the Psalmist turns to implore the mercy of God.

21. **But thou, Jehovah the Lord** (or, **my Lord**), **work thou for me**] Lit. *with me*: put forth Thy power so as to shew that Thou art on my side, and prove Thyself all that Thou hast declared Thyself to be. Cp. cxix. 126; Jer. xiv. 7. **God** is printed in capitals in A.V., because it represents the sacred Name **Jehovah**, for which *Elōhīm*, 'God,' was substituted by the Jews in reading when *Adōnai*, 'Lord,' the regular substitute, is joined with it. This combination of names *Jehovah Adonai* occurs in the Psalter only in lxviii. 20; cxl. 7; cxli. 8; and elsewhere only in Hab. iii. 19.
because &c.] Cp. lxix. 16.

22. Cp. *v.* 16; xl. 17; lv. 4.

23. Like a shadow when it declines or is stretched out towards evening (cii. 11), and is about to disappear altogether, so am I made to depart: the form of the verb implies compulsion from without.
I am tossed up and down] Or, **driven away**. The point of comparison is the helplessness of the locust swept along by the wind (Ex. x. 19; Joel ii. 20).

24. *faileth of fatness*] **Hath grown lean and lost fatness** may be the meaning. But more probably, **is shrunken for want of oil**. In his distress he had no appetite for food (cii. 4), and like a mourner (**2 Sam. xiv. 2**) abstained from the use of oil.

25. **And I—I am become a reproach unto them:**
When they see me, they shake their head,
a gesture of contempt and abhorrence, as though I were the object of the wrath of God. Cp. xxii. 7; lxix. 10—12; Lam. ii. 15; Job xvi. 4.

26 Help me, O LORD my God:
O save me according to thy mercy:
27 That they may know that this *is* thy hand;
That thou, LORD, hast done it.
28 Let them curse, but bless thou:
When they arise, let them be ashamed; but let thy servant rejoice.
29 Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame,
And let them cover *themselves with* their own confusion, as *with* a mantle.
30 I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth;
Yea, I will praise him among the multitude.
31 For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor,
To save *him* from those that condemn his soul.

26—31. Repeated prayers for help, ending with calm assurance that the end of suffering is at hand.

26. Cp. xxxi. 16.

27. *that this* is *thy hand*] That thou hast interposed for the deliverance of Thy servant. With *hast done it* cp. *v.* 21, lit. *do thou with me.*

28. **They may curse, but thou wilt bless:**
They arise and are put to shame, but thy servant shall rejoice.

They and *thou* are emphatically contrasted.

29. **Mine adversaries shall be clothed with dishonour,**
And shall wrap themselves in their own shame as in a mantle.

Cp. *vv.* 18, 19; lxxi. 13; xxxv. 26.

30. **I will give great thanks unto Jehovah with my mouth**] Confidently he anticipates the resumption of his former thanksgivings and praises (*v.* 1) in the congregation.

31. A contrast to *vv.* 6, 7. Jehovah stands at the right hand of the needy (*vv.* 16, 22) as his advocate and champion, while the accuser is to stand at the right hand of the wicked man. The wicked man is to be found guilty, as he deserves, while his victim will be saved from the persecutors who are minded to *judge his soul*, i.e. condemn him to death.

PSALM CX.[1]

This brief but weighty Psalm—*brevis numero verborum, magnus pondere sententiarum*, as it is called by St Augustine—is addressed to one whom the Psalmist styles *my lord*. He speaks in the language (*v.* 1)

[1] Compare Driver, *Lit. of O.T.* p. 384; Orelli, *O.T. Prophecy*, pp. 153 ff.; Gore, *Bampton Lectures*, pp 196 ff., 270; Gifford, *The Authorship of the CXth Psalm*; Sharpe, *Psalm CX*; Baudissin, *A. T. Priesterthum*, p. 259 f.

and with the authority (*v.* 4) of a prophet. He has received a Divine revelation concerning his lord, which he communicates to him for his encouragement in the work that lies before him. Jehovah has chosen him to share His throne. He purposes by His own power to subdue all his enemies. Zion is the seat of his kingdom. Zion is the centre from which goes forth his victorious might. There he is to rule, unmoved by the menaces of surrounding enemies. When he musters his people for battle, countless hosts of youthful warriors flock eagerly to his standard, animated by a spirit of loyal devotion and willing self-sacrifice (1—3).

The king,—for though he is not expressly so called, it is implied that he is a king,—is also a priest: not a hereditary priest of the line of Aaron, but a priest by a special Divine appointment, whose priesthood resembles that of Melchizedek. In him the primeval unity of royalty and priesthood, seen in the ancient priest-king of Salem, reappears (4).

The scene changes to the battle-field. When this king goes forth to war, Jehovah goes with him. He stands at his right hand as his champion, executing judgement upon the nations, destroying his adversaries far and wide. The Psalm closes with a picture of the king halting for a moment to refresh himself as he pursues his foes, and then pressing on with fresh vigour to complete his triumph (5—7).

To whom does the Psalm refer? To some historical king, or to the future Messiah? If it could be considered by itself, apart from the New Testament use of it, we should have little hesitation in regarding it as addressed by some prophet to the reigning king, like Pss. xx, xxi, xlv. Lofty as is its language, it does not go beyond that of Pss. ii and lxxii, which we have seen reason to think have a primary historical reference. It introduces a new idea, the priesthood of the king, but all its language can be explained from the peculiar position and significance of the theocratic king, as the earthly representative of Jehovah. He was the embodiment for the time, of God's purpose to establish His kingdom on earth, and therefore prophets and psalmists were taught to speak of him in terms far exceeding the personal significance of any particular king, in words which were to be fulfilled after the lapse of ages with a larger, spiritual meaning.

It has however been very commonly maintained that the reference which our Lord made to this Psalm must, for the Christian student, determine its authorship and interpretation. Many who in every other case regard Messianic Psalms as having a primary historical meaning, feel that here our Lord's authority compels them to hold that this Psalm was written by David, and was addressed by him to the future Messiah, who, he believed, would spring from his family. It is therefore necessary carefully to examine the precise nature of our Lord's reference to the Psalm.

Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, Scribes, had been questioning Jesus, with the object of ensnaring Him in His talk. When they had been silenced by the wisdom of His answers, so that "no man durst ask him any question," He proceeded to question His questioners. "How say the scribes that the Christ is the son of David? David himself said in the Holy Spirit,

The Lord said unto my Lord,
Sit thou on my right hand,
Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet.

David himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he his son?" (Mark xii. 35 ff.). St Luke's account (xx. 41 ff.) is substantially the same. St Matthew's account (xxii. 41 ff.) differs somewhat in detail, and brings out more clearly the point, that the words are rather a question and a challenge than an assertion and an argument.

"While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, What think ye of the Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in the Spirit call him Lord, saying,

The Lord said unto my Lord,
Sit thou on my right hand,
Till I put thine enemies underneath thy feet?

If David then calleth him Lord, how is he his son? And no one was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions."

The question assumes (1) that the Psalm was written by David, (2) that it was inspired, and (3) that it *directly* refers to the Messiah. The inability of the Pharisees to answer shews that these premisses were unhesitatingly admitted. If they could have replied that the Psalm was not written by David, or that it was not inspired, or that it did not refer to the Messiah, they would have had an answer ready to hand. But evidently it did not occur to them that any one of these points could be disputed. David was unquestioningly regarded as the author, if not of the whole Psalter, at least of the Psalms which bore his name; the Hagiographa, if not placed on the same level of inspiration as the Law and the Prophets, were yet held to have been written by inspiration (רוח הקדש = *ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ*); the Psalm, it must be inferred, was commonly understood to refer to the Messiah.

But in assuming these premisses for the purpose of His question, does our Lord stamp them with the sanction of His authority? It has been very truly pointed out that one of His methods of teaching was "to ask men questions such as would lead them to cross-examine themselves closely in the light of their own principles[1]." It seems neither unreasonable nor irreverent to suppose that He was doing so in this instance. Taking His opponents upon their own ground, He desired to arouse their consciences to confess that if only they followed out their own beliefs to their legitimate conclusions, they must look for a Messiah who was more than a mere human descendant of David, and therefore they ought not to be scandalised at His claims. But it does not follow that He meant to endorse the correctness of those beliefs in their entirety. He accepts, for example, their reference of the Psalm to the Messiah. But could He have accepted the Messianic idea which they derived from it? We have no precise information as to the contemporary interpretation of it, but it could hardly fail to have been regarded as supporting the popular

[1] Gore, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 198.

conception of the Messiah as a conquering king, who was to expel the Romans and reign triumphantly in Zion. To such an interpretation He could not have meant to lend the sanction of His authority. But it was not necessary for him to correct it at the moment. So too with the question of authorship. He was not pronouncing a judgement in criticism. The very notion of criticism at that time was unknown. Tradition held absolute sway. Criticism would have been an anachronism and an impossibility. For His present purpose of stimulating reflection He could accept without correction or inquiry the tradition which was universally current. The Psalm *was* Messianic; the language of it, viewed in the light of history, pointed to the Messiah as One greater than David. The conclusion which the Pharisees ought to have drawn from their own premisses, had they been honest with themselves, was a true one, even if those premisses were not, from a literary and historical point of view, exact.

It would be out of place here to enter upon any discussion of the mysterious question of the limitations of our Lord's knowledge in His life on earth. But it is undoubtedly "easier to conceive of our Lord using this sort of argument, if we accept the position that He, the very God, habitually spoke in His incarnate life on earth, under the limitations of a properly human consciousness[1]."

If then it may be maintained that, in the words of Bishop Thirlwall as given by Bishop Perowne, "we are left very much in the same position with regard to the Psalm as if our Lord had not asked these questions about it," it will not be necessary to isolate it from the other royal Messianic Psalms, which refer in the first instance to the circumstances of the time. The most natural and obvious view will be that it was not addressed by David himself to the Messiah, but by some prophet to David, or to some later king or prince.

Its date and occasion have been much disputed. (1) By some it has been supposed to refer to one of the Maccabees, who were at once priests and princes. Most plausible are the suggestions that it was addressed to Jonathan or Simon. Jonathan was chosen "prince and leader" after the death of Judas, and "took the governance upon him, and rose up in the stead of his brother Judas" (1 Macc. ix. 30, 31). Subsequently he was appointed high priest by Alexander Balas (c. B.C. 153), who also "sent him a purple robe, and a crown of gold" (1 Macc. x. 20). Of Simon, who succeeded Jonathan, expelled the Syrians from the Acra, and secured the independence of the Jews (B.C. 142), it is recorded that "the people made him their leader and high priest"... and "king Demetrius [ii, Nicator] confirmed to him the high priesthood"...and "the Jews and priests were well pleased that Simon should be their leader and high priest for ever, until there should arise a faithful prophet" (1 Macc. xiv. 35, 38, 41)[2].

[1] Gore, p. 198. Cp. the important notes on p. 270. See also Sanday, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 419 f., on the "neutral zone among our Lord's sayings," i.e. "sayings in which He takes up ideas and expressions current at the time and uses without really endorsing them."

[2] A confirmation of the view that the Psalm was addressed to Simon has been found in the fact observed by the Rev. G. Margoliouth, *Academy*, 1892, p. 182, and independently by Prof. Bickell, that the initial letters of the clause *Sit thou* &c. and the

There are however at least two considerations which are fatal to the hypothesis of a Maccabæan origin for this Psalm. (*a*) The Maccabees were not priests and their princes. But the Psalm refers to a prince upon whom is conferred the dignity of a peculiar priesthood, distinct apparently from the hereditary priesthood of the descendants of Aaron. (*b*) The very terms in which Simon's election is recorded, "until there should arise a faithful prophet," testify to the fact that the Maccabæan age was sadly conscious that the voice of prophecy was silent (cp. 1 Macc. iv. 46; ix. 27). How then could a Maccabæan poet presume to speak, as the author of this Psalm does, in the language (vv. 1) and with the authority (vv. 2) of prophecy? To these considerations it may be added that it is difficult to suppose that the action of heathen princes in the appointment of Jonathan and the confirmation of Simon could be spoken of in the lofty language of this Psalm.

(2) The coronation of Joshua, as a type of the union of the royal and priestly offices in the person of the Messiah (Zech. vi. 9–15), has been pointed to by others as the occasion of the Psalm. But here again it is the priest who is crowned, not the prince who is declared to be also priest. The triumphant note of the Psalm moreover, presaging victory for this great ruler, is by no means what might be expected from the circumstances of the struggling community in the returned exiles.

(3) It remains to refer the Psalm to the period of the monarchy. It is true that the king of Israel did not bear the title of priest; but as the head and representative of a priestly nation (Ex. xix. 6) he had a priestly character; and the priesthood spoken of in the Psalm is clearly something special, something distinct from the regular hereditary priesthood. If the Psalm belongs to the period of the monarchy, there seems to be no convincing ground for refusing to refer it to the time of David. The objection that an early poem must have found a place in one of the earlier books rests upon the unproved assumption that no early poetry was preserved independently of the collections contained in these books. At any rate there is no incident recorded in the historical books so likely to have suggested the Psalm as the translation of the Ark to Zion by David. The presence of the Ark on Zion was the outward sign that Jehovah had fixed His throne there. Beside it dwelt David, sitting as it were in the place of honour at Jehovah's right hand as His viceroy. The new king of Jerusalem must reproduce the twofold office of the ancient priest-king of Salem, and become a type of the Messianic king, in whom these offices were to be united (Jer. xxx. 21; Zech. vi. 11–13). Many of those who regard the Psalm as directly Messianic find in this and other incidents of David's life the motive of the Psalm, for "prophecy never seems wholly to forsake the ground of history," and "we must look to some occurrence in David's life for the secret impulse of his song." But if we are free to choose, it seems best to regard the Psalm as addressed to David, and possessing a

three following verses spell the name Simon (שִׁמְעוֹן). But this appears to be a mere accidental coincidence. Acrostic, giving the name of the poet or of the person celebrated in the poem appear to have been a comparatively late invention. No tradition of their occurrence in the O.T. has survived.

primary historical meaning rich in promise and encouragement for him in the founding of his new kingdom. This view however does not diminish the profound Messianic significance of the Psalm. "God through His Spirit so speaks in the Psalmist that words not directly addressed to Christ find their fulfilment in Him" (Bp Westcott). As the ages rolled on it was seen that its words were not fulfilled in David, but pointed forward to One Who was at once David's son and David's Lord. And in the event it was seen that the session at God's right hand was the exaltation of Him who had passed victoriously through humiliation and passion to His former glory; that the eternal priesthood of which it speaks was His eternal priesthood of atonement and intercession and benediction; that the victories which it predicts are His assured triumph over the spiritual enemies of sin and death. Comp. generally *Introd.* pp. lxxvi ff.; and the Introductions to Pss. ii, xlv, lxxii.

No Psalm is more frequently quoted and alluded to in the N.T. It was, as we have seen, quoted by our Lord (Matt. xxii. 44; Mk. xii. 36; Lk. xx. 42, 43); and His use of its language as recorded in Matt. xxvi. 64 (=Mk. xiv. 62; Lk. xxii. 69) clearly involved (since its Messianic significance was acknowledged) an assertion of His Messiahship in answer to the High-priest's adjuration. *V.* 1 is applied by St Peter to the exaltation of Christ in His Resurrection and Ascension (Acts ii. 34, 35), and is quoted in Heb. i. 13 to illustrate the superiority of the Son to Angels. Cp. also Mk. xvi. 19; Acts v. 31; vii. 55, 56; Rom. viii. 34; 1 Cor. xv. 24 ff.; Eph. i. 20; Col. iii. 1; Heb. i. 3; viii. 1; x. 12, 13; xii. 2; 1 Peter iii. 22; Rev. iii. 21. *V.* 4 serves as the basis of the argument in Heb. v. 5 ff.; vi. 20; vii. 17 ff. concerning the superiority of Christ's priesthood to the Levitical priesthood.

The selection of the Psalm as a Proper Psalm for Christmas Day needs no comment.

A Psalm of David.

The LORD said unto my Lord, 110

1—3. Jehovah's oracle concerning the king: the assurance of victory over his enemies: the willing service of his people.

1. *The LORD said unto my Lord*] Jehovah's oracle unto [or *touching*] my lord! The rendering *said* (R.V. *saith*) does not represent the full force of the word *ne'um*, which is commonly used of solemn Divine utterances (Gen. xxii. 16, and frequently in the prophets; in the Psalter elsewhere xxxvi. 1 only). The Psalmist speaks with the authority of a prophet who is conscious of having received a message from God. It makes little difference whether we render *unto* or *touching*. The message is addressed through the Psalmist to the king, and the king is the subject of it. Strictly speaking the 'oracle' is the remainder of the verse 'Sit thou.. footstool,' *vv.* 2, 3 being the Psalmist's expansion of it: but the whole Psalm is a Divine message of encouragement for the king.

my Lord] The R.V. has rightly dropped the capital letter, as being

Sit thou at my right hand,
Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.
2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion:
Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

of the nature of an interpretation. 'My lord' (*adōnī*) is the title of respect and reverence used in the O.T. in addressing or speaking of a person of rank and dignity, especially a king (Gen. xxiii. 6; 1 Sam. xxii. 12; 1 Kings i. *passim*, xviii. 7; and frequently).

sit thou at my right hand] The seat at the king's right hand was the place of honour (1 Kings ii. 19; Matt. xx. 21; cp. Ps. xlv. 9; 1 Macc. x. 63). But more than mere honour is implied here. This king is to share Jehovah's throne, to be next to Him in dignity, to be supported by all the force of His authority and power. The idea corresponds to the recognition of the king as Jehovah's son in Ps. ii. 7. Somewhat similarly the king was said to 'sit on the throne of Jehovah' (1 Chron. xxix. 23; cp. xxviii. 5; 2 Chron. xiii. 8). The customs of ancient Arabia supply an illustration. There the *Ridf* or Viceroy sat on the king's right hand, and took precedence next to him. Greek poets spoke of their gods as 'assessors' of Zeus, 'sharing his throne.' Pindar (fragm. 112 Donaldson) speaks of Athene as "sitting on the right hand of the father (Zeus) to receive his commands for the gods." Callimachus (Hymn to Apollo, 28, 29) says that Apollo has power to reward the chorus, "since he sits at Zeus' right hand." But still more to the point, in view of the Messianic interpretation of the passage, is the description of Wisdom in Wisd. ix. 4 as 'Wisdom that sitteth by God on His throne' (δὸς μοι τὴν τῶν σῶν θρόνων παρεδρον σοφίαν). The residence of the king on Zion in close proximity to the Ark was an outward symbol of his dignity.

until I make thine enemies thy footstool] A metaphor for complete subjugation, derived from the practice described in Josh. x. 24. Cp. 1 Kings v. 3; 1 Cor. xv. 25, and for the promise cp. Ps. ii. 8, 9. *Until* need not of course imply that the session is to come to an end when the subjugation has been effected.

For the N.T. application of this verse to the exaltation of Christ in the Resurrection, see above, p. 665.

2. **The sceptre of thy strength shall Jehovah stretch forth** (or, **send forth**) **out of Zion**] The poet speaks, expanding the oracle. *The rod* or *sceptre* is the symbol of authority and power, the instrument of chastisement. (Cp. Is. x. 24, 26; and Ps. ii. 9, though the Heb. word there is different.) Jehovah wields it on the king's behalf. "He giveth strength unto his king" (1 Sam. ii. 10). For the phrase *rod of thy strength*, cp. Jer. xlviii. 17; Ezek. xix. 12, 14.

out of Zion] The capital of the new kingdom. Cp. ii. 6.

rule thou in the midst of thine enemies] Supply *saying* before this clause. Jehovah speaks. The command is virtually a promise. Though enemies surround the king on every side, he is fearlessly to assume his sovereignty, and victoriously to exercise it. The word for 'rule' is

Thy people *shall be* willing in the day of thy power, in 3
the beauties of holiness

used of Solomon in 1 Kings iv. 24; cp. also Num. xxiv. 19; Ps. lxxii. 8 (A.V. *have dominion*).

3. *Thy people* shall be *willing in the day of thy power*] Rather, Thy people offer themselves willingly (lit. *are freewill offerings*) in the day of thy muster (lit. *army*). The promised victory is not to be won without human agency, and Jehovah inspires the king's subjects with a spirit of loyal self-devotion. Theirs is no forced unwilling service. Their alacrity recalls the days of Deborah, when the people and the governors of Israel "offered themselves willingly" to fight the battles of Jehovah (Judg. v. 2, 9).

The connexion of the clauses in the remainder of the verse is somewhat uncertain. It is possible, with R.V. marg., to join *in the beauties of holiness*, or, as it should rather be rendered, in holy adornments, with the preceding clause, and *from the womb of the morning* with the following clause. In this case *from the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth* might describe the constantly renewed youthful vigour of the king. But it is preferable, with R.V. text, to adhere to the Massoretic accentuation, and join both clauses with what follows, *In holy adornments, from the womb of the morning, thou hast the dew of thy youth.*

These words will then be a further description of the army mustering to march forth to battle for the king. *Thy youth* denotes the youthful warriors who flock with eagerness to his standard. They are clad *in holy adornments*, as it were an army of priests following their priestly leader. They are compared to *dew*; the mysterious birth of the morning, so abundant and so precious in hot Eastern countries. The comparison, however, need not be limited to a single point. It may further suggest their sudden appearance in obedience to the Divine command, their freshness, their inspiriting effect upon the king, their numbers, the glittering of their armour in the sunshine. Cp. Hos. xiv. 5; Is. xxvi. 19; 2 Sam. xvii. 12; Mic. v. 7, for various emblematical uses of dew. Cp. also Milton, *Par. Lost*, v. 744,

> "An host
> Innumerable as the stars of night
> Or stars of morning, dewdrops, which the sun
> Impearls on every leaf and every flower."

in the beauties of holiness] Rather, in holy adornments. The similar phrase in xxix. 2; xcvi. 9 (= 1 Chron. xvi. 29); 2 Chron. xxii. 21; denotes the "holy garments for glory and for beauty" in which the priests were arrayed (Ex. xxviii. 2). Israel was "a kingdom of priests"; these warriors had in an especial manner offered themselves to fight the battles of Jehovah, and their armour was the symbol of their consecration. Those who follow the priest-king are at once priests and warriors.

The reading however is uncertain. The plural HADRĒ (הדרי)

From the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of
thy youth.

4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent,
Thou *art* a priest for ever
After the order of Melchizedek.

'adornments' does not occur elsewhere, and a trifling change in a single letter gives the reading HARRE (הָרֵי); *on the holy mountains* (lxxxvii. 1), i.e. the mountains of Zion, where the army musters. This reading is supported by Symmachus and Jerome (*in montibus sanctis*), and agrees well with the figure of the dew. Cp. cxxxiii. 3.

from the womb of the morning] The morning is the mother of the dew. For the personification, cp. Job iii. 9; xxxviii. 12, 13.

The rendering of this verse in the LXX deserves notice on account of the doctrinal importance attached to it by many of the Fathers who were dependent on that Version or on the Vulgate. Reading some of the words with different vowels, the LXX rendered it, "With thee is the beginning in the day of thy power, in the splendours of thy saints; from the womb before the day-star I begat thee." The last clause was interpreted of the eternal generation of Christ, or of His birth in the early morning.

4. The priesthood of the king.

Jehovah *hath sworn, and will not repent*] The king is also priest by an immutable Divine decree. The immutability of this decree is affirmed in the most solemn manner possible. The 'oath' of Him who cannot lie is no stronger than His word; He who knows all things from the beginning cannot repent or change His purpose (Num. xxiii. 19; 1 Sam. xv. 29), though man's failure or change may necessitate a temporary interruption of His purpose which appears to finite man in the light of a 'repentance.' But He who is absolutely true and unchanging condescends for man's sake to confirm His word by an oath. Cp. Am. vi. 8; Ps. cxxxii. 11.

Thou art *a priest for ever after the order* (or, *manner*) *of Melchizedek*] Melchizedek, king of Salem, and priest of God Most High (*El Elyôn*), appears in Gen. xiv. 18 ff. as the representative of a true faith in the primitive world. He was a type of that union of civil and religious life, which must be the ideal of the perfect state. The thought here affirmed is that the new king of Jerusalem must hold a position in no way inferior to that of the ancient king of Salem. As the representative of "a kingdom of priests and an holy nation" (Ex. xix. 6) he had a priestly character. As the representative of God to the people and of the people to God he had a mediatorial office. David, when he brought up the Ark into the city of David, laid aside his royal robes and wore the dress of a priest (2 Sam. vi. 14): both he and Solomon exercised priestly functions in offering sacrifice, or at least in directing the sacrifices, if they did not actually offer them (2 Sam. vi. 17, 18; 1 Kings viii. 62 ff.), and in blessing the people (2 Sam. vi. 18; 1 Kings viii. 14, 55); Solomon deposed and appointed a high-priest (1 Kings ii. 27, 35). David's sons, in whatever sense the term may have been used,

The Lord at thy right hand
Shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.
He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill *the places* 6
with the dead bodies;
He shall wound the heads over many countries.

were styled priests (2 Sam. viii. 18). But the priesthood of the king is here implicitly distinguished from the hereditary priesthood of the family of Aaron, as a priesthood 'after the manner of Melchizedek.'

for ever, as applied to an individual, may be a relative term, as in 1 Macc. xiv. 41, quoted above, p. 663. Cp. 1 Sam. i. 22. But the promise of an eternal priesthood corresponds rather to the promise of eternal dominion in 2 Sam. vii. 13, 16, 25, 29. Made to an individual, it is realised in his descendants. Jeremiah speaks of the priestly right of access to God which is to be conferred upon the Messianic prince (xxx. 21); and the union of civil and religious life was symbolised under the altered circumstances of the return from Babylon by the coronation of Joshua (Zech. vi. 12, 13).

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews dwells upon this verse in his exposition of the typical significance of the priesthood of Melchizedek, quoting it to illustrate the divine appointment of Christ to his high-priestly office, and the eternal duration and unique character of that office (Heb. v. 6; vi. 20; vii. 17, 21).

5—7. The scene changes to the battle-field. The king goes forth to war against his enemies. But he does not go in his own strength. Jehovah is at his right hand to fight his battles. In hot pursuit of his flying foes he halts but for a moment to refresh himself, and then presses on to his final triumph.

5. *The Lord*] *Adōnai*, i.e. Jehovah. The king is still addressed. Jehovah stands at his right hand as his champion in the battle. Cp. xvi. 8; cxxi. 5; cix. 31.

shall **shatter** *kings*] The verb is in the perfect tense, but the tenses in *vv.* 6, 7 shew that it is to be regarded, according to a common Hebrew idiom, as a 'prophetic' perfect. The victory is still future, but the Psalmist regards it as already won.

in the day of his wrath] The day of judgement upon the surrounding heathen nations, which is further described in *v.* 6. Cp. ii. 5, 12; xxi. 9; Job xx. 28; Is. xiii. 9, 13; Zeph. ii. 3.

6. *He shall judge among* **the nations**] The subject of the sentence must be Jehovah. Cp. vii. 8; ix. 8; lxxvi. 9. The nations are the enemies of *v.* 2. On them He will execute judgement, vindicating the cause of His king and people.

he shall fill (the battle-field) **with corpses**] This is on the whole the best rendering of an obscurely brief phrase. The tense is, as before, a prophetic perfect.

he shall **shatter** *the heads over many countries*] i.e. their rulers. But the usage of the phrase in lxviii. 21, Hab. iii. 13, points rather to the rendering, **he shall shatter the head** (of his enemies) **over** (all) **the**

7 He shall drink of the brook in the way:
Therefore shall he lift up the head.

wide earth. The earth is the battle-field whereon He deals deadly blows upon all His enemies. Delitzsch and others think that the last words may also be rendered *the land of Rabbah*, and may contain at least an allusive reference to David's conquest of the Ammonite capital (2 Sam. xii. 26 ff.).

7. The subject of this verse is not Jehovah, though the O.T. does not shrink from the boldest anthropomorphisms (e.g. lxxviii. 65; Is. lxiii. 1 ff.), but the king. The transition is abrupt, but as in the prophets we pass insensibly from the words of Jehovah to the words of the prophet, so here we pass from the action of Jehovah to the action of the king, who is His representative.

The poet presents him to our imagination in hot pursuit of the enemy. Though wearied with the toil of battle, he does not desist. He halts but for a moment to drink from the mountain torrent which he crosses. Refreshed and invigorated, he presses forward to complete his victory, till he is exalted in triumph over every foe.

lift high *the head*] i.e. be triumphantly victorious. Cp. iii. 3; xxvii. 6.

The martial language of the Psalm receives a natural explanation if its primary reference was to David, at a time when the nation of Israel had to fight for its existence against enemies on every side, rather than to the Messiah whom he expected. That such language should be imitated in the Psalms of Solomon (xvii. 23 ff.), in an age which looked for a conquering king as its Messianic ideal, is not to be wondered at. The passage is worth quoting for the sake of its contrast as well as its resemblance to this Psalm and Psalm ii.

"Behold, O Lord, and raise up for them their king, the son of David,
in the time which thou knowest, O God,
That he may reign over Israel thy servant;
And gird him with strength to break in pieces unrighteous rulers;
To cleanse Jerusalem from the heathen that trample it down and destroy it,
In wisdom and in righteousness;
To thrust out sinners from the inheritance,
To break in pieces the arrogance of the sinners,
To shatter all their substance as a potter's vessels with a rod of iron.
To destroy the lawless nations with the word of his mouth,
That the nations may flee from him at his rebuke,
And to punish sinners in the imagination of their heart."

A translation of the Targum is subjoined. It will be noted that the Psalm is treated as referring to David.

Jehovah said by His word that He would make me lord of all Israel. But He said to me again, Wait for Saul who is of the tribe of Benjamin, until he die, for one kingdom approacheth not another [i.e. there cannot be two kings together], and afterwards I will make thine enemies thy footstool. [*Another Targum.* Jehovah said by His word, that He would

give me dominion, because I devoted myself to learn the law of His (v. l. my) right hand. Wait until I make thine enemy thy footstool.] The rod of thy strength shall Jehovah send forth from Zion, and thou shalt rule in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people of the house of Israel who devote themselves willingly to the study of the law, in the day of battle shalt thou be holpen with them: in splendours of holiness shall the mercies of God hasten unto thee like the descent of the dew: thy generations shall dwell securely. Jehovah hath sworn and will not repent, that thou shalt be appointed prince of the world to come for merit, because thou hast been an innocent king. The Shechinah of Jehovah, at thy right hand hath stricken through kings in the day of His wrath. He is appointed judge over the peoples: he hath filled the earth with the bodies of the wicked who have been slain: he hath stricken through the heads of exceeding many kings over the earth. From the mouth of the prophet in the way shall he receive doctrine; therefore shall he exalt the head.

PSALM CXI.

Psalms cxi and cxii are closely connected in structure, contents, and language. Each consists of twenty-two lines, which begin with the letters of the alphabet in regular order, and are arranged in eight distichs and two tristichs. Ps. cxi celebrates the power, goodness, and righteousness of Jehovah; Ps. cxii describes the prosperity, beneficence, and righteousness of those who fear Him. Words and phrases applied to God in Ps. cxi are transferred in Ps. cxii with some modification of meaning, and sometimes with startling boldness, to the godly man, describing his character as the reflection of the character of Jehovah. Thus cxii. 1 *a* takes up the thought of cxi. 10 *a*: with cxii. 1 *b* (*delighteth*) cp. cxi. 2: cxii. 3 *b*, 9 *b* = cxi. 3 *b*: cxii. 4 *b* = cxi. 4 *b*: with cxii. 6 *b* cp. cxi. 4 *a*. The trustfulness of the godly man in cxii. 7, 8 answers to the trustworthiness of Jehovah in cxi. 7, 8. Other correspondences of thought and language may be noticed by the student.

Both Psalms draw largely from older Psalms and from Proverbs, and doubtless belong to the period after the exile, but to what part of it there is nothing to shew. Several MSS of the LXX, and the Vulgate, prefix to Ps. cxii the title, *For the Return of Haggai and Zechariah* (*τῆς ἐπιστροφῆς Ἀγγαίου καὶ Ζαχαρίου*): and the same title seems originally to have been prefixed to Ps. cxi in the LXX, though it is now found in the Syro-hexaplar version only.

Praise ye the LORD. 111

(א) I will praise the LORD with *my* whole heart,

(ב) In the assembly of the upright, and *in* the congregation.

1. *Praise ye the LORD*] Heb. *Hallelujah*. This liturgical call to praise forms no part of the structure of the Psalm. See note on civ. 35.

I will give thanks unto Jehovah with a whole heart,
In the council of the upright and in the congregation.

2 (ג) The works of the LORD *are* great,
(ד) Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.
3 (ה) His work *is* honourable and glorious:
(ו) And his righteousness endureth for ever.
4 (ז) He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered:
(ח) The LORD *is* gracious and full of compassion.
5 (ט) He hath given meat unto them that fear him:

The word *sôd* denotes (1) the confidential intercourse of intimate friends, xxv. 14, &c., (2) a gathering or council of such persons (lxxxix. 7); and it has been thought by some that it is here contrasted with *the congregation*. Hence Coverdale (P.B.V.), *secretly among the faithful and in the congregation*. But the grammatical construction does not support the distinction. The congregation assembled for worship is termed *council* as being united by the sense of common fellowship, and its members are described as *the upright*, for it is presumed that they are actuated by true devotion. Cp. xxxiii. 1; i. 5.

2. The ground of praise. *The* doings *of Jehovah* of which the Psalmist is thinking are those which He has wrought for His people (*v.* 6), but for us they will include His works in Nature (civ. 13, 24, 31) as well as in history. They are studied or to be studied (Jer. *exquirenda*) with loving diligence by all who delight in learning to understand His revelation of Himself (i. 2; Neh. x. 11). Less probable are the renderings *in regard to all their desirableness* (Prov. viii. 11); or, *in regard to all their* (LXX *his*) *purposes*.

3. His work is majesty and splendour,
And his righteousness standeth fast for ever.

All His works are a revelation of those attributes of royal dignity with which He clothes Himself (civ. 1), and at the same time they are the outcome of His eternal righteousness. With Him there is no divorce between might and right. Similarly "His counsel standeth fast for ever" (xxxiii. 11).

4. *He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered*] Lit. *made a memorial for his wonderful works*, particularly the deliverance of His people from Egypt, by the continuous tradition which they were charged to hand on from one generation to another (lxxviii. 3; Ex. xii. 26; &c.), and by the festivals and ordinances which commemorated that deliverance, especially the Passover (Ex. xii. 14). But the words may also be rendered, *He hath made* (himself) *a memorial by his wonderful works*, won for Himself honour by them[1]. Cp. Neh. ix. 10, "So thou didst get thee a name"; Ex. xiv. 4, 17.

gracious and full of compassion] Cp. ciii. 8. Fundamental attributes of Jehovah (Ex. xxxiv. 6) illustrated in the Exodus, and in all His dealings with Israel (Neh. ix. 17, 31).

5. *meat*] As He made provision for Israel's wants in the wilderness by the manna, so He provides for the wants of His people at all times

[1] *Zēker*, 'memorial,' is nearly equivalent to 'name (cxxxv. 13, and often).

(ו) He will ever be mindful of his covenant.
(ב) He hath shewed his people the power of his works, 6
(ל) That *he* may give them the heritage of the heathen.
(מ) The works of his hands *are* verity and judgment; 7
(נ) All his commandments *are* sure.
(ס) They stand fast for ever and ever, 8
(ע) *And are* done in truth and uprightness.
(פ) He sent redemption unto his people: 9

(Ps. xxxiv. 9, 10). *Tereph*, lit. *prey* of a lion, in later Heb. has the general sense of food (Prov. xxxi. 15, Mal. iii. 10). The unusual word is chosen here for the sake of the acrostic.

he will remember his covenant for ever] The deliverance from Egypt was a proof that Jehovah remembered His covenant with the patriarchs (Exod. ii. 24; vi. 5), and a pledge that He would never be unmindful of it. Cp. cv. 8, 10.

6. *That he may give them* &c.] R.V., **In giving them the heritage of the nations.** By dispossessing the Canaanites and giving Israel their land for its inheritance Jehovah most signally demonstrated His might (Deut. iv. 38 and often). That gift was the pledge of a still wider sovereignty, to be fulfilled only in a spiritual way (Ps. ii. 8; Is. lx. 14).

7. *verity and judgment*] **Truth and right.** Jehovah's actions are manifestations of His eternal attributes of truth and justice (Deut. xxxii. 4). He is constantly true to His promises, unfailingly just in His moral government of the world. The gift of Canaan to Israel was the fulfilment of His promise to the patriarchs, while the expulsion of its former inhabitants was a just retribution for their sins (Deut. ix. 4, 5).

his commandments] R.V. **his precepts**, the various special injunctions in which man's duties are set forth. These are sure, trustworthy, not mutable or arbitrary. By a natural transition the Psalmist passes from the mighty works which Jehovah has done for His people to the commandments which He has given them. The memories of Sinai naturally follow those of the Exodus. This verse is a reminiscence of xix. 7—9: cp. also *a*. 3 *b* with xix. 9 *a*. The word for *precepts* is peculiar to the Psalter: xix. 8; ciii. 18; **cxix (21 times).**

8. Stablished for ever and ever,
Made in truth and uprightness.

This verse further characterises Jehovah's precepts, and to suit his acrostic the poet uses the word *'āsūîm* in the sense of 'made,' 'enacted,' not in its common sense of 'done,' 'performed' (ciii. 18).

9, 10. A final summary of God's love and man's duty.

9. *He* **hath sent** *redemption*] The primary reference is to the deliverance from Egypt (Deut. vii. 8 and often), and the ratification of the covenant at Sinai: but the restoration from exile in Babylon had been a second and scarcely less notable act of redemption. By it Jehovah had given proof of His faithfulness to His covenant, which in

(צ) He hath commanded his covenant for ever:
(ק) Holy and reverend *is* his name.
10 (ר) The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom:
(ש) A good understanding have all they that do *his commandments:*
(ת) His praise endureth for ever.

the dark days of the Exile might have seemed abrogated for ever (Jer. xxxiii. 20 ff.; Is. xlix. 14).

holy and reverend is *his name*] To be feared (xcvi. 4); elsewhere rendered *fearful* (Deut. xxviii. 58) or *terrible* (Ps. xcix. 3). By these deliverances and acts of grace Jehovah has revealed Himself as a God Who is holy and must be feared (Ex. xv. 11; Is. xxix. 23; viii. 13).

10. *The fear of* Jehovah is *the beginning of wisdom*] The fundamental principle of the 'Wisdom' or religious philosophy of Israel (Prov. ix. 10; i. 7; Job xxviii. 28; Ecclesiasticus i. 20). The A.V. *reverend* in *v.* 9 obscures the close connexion between this verse and *v.* 9. Jehovah has revealed Himself as One Who is to be feared; to fear Him therefore is the starting point of all true wisdom; and Ps. cxii develops the thought of the happiness of the man whose life is governed by this principle. In connexion with the attribute *holy* in *v.* 9 it may be noted that Prov. ix. 10 adds, "and the knowledge of the Holy One is discernment."

a good understanding] A.V. marg. *good success*. R.V. marg. *good repute*. The cognate verb often denotes success resulting from intelligence, and in Prov. iii. 4 the word approximates to the meaning *repute*, but it is best to retain the rendering *understanding*. Cp. Prov. xiii. 15.

that do his commandments] Heb. *that do them*; i.e. all that is implied in the fear of Jehovah. Insight is the reward of obedience. Cp. John vii. 17. R.V. restores Coverdale's *that do thereafter*.

his praise standeth fast *for ever*] All the attributes of Jehovah which demand man's praise are, like His righteousness (*v.* 3), eternal. Thus the Psalmist rounds off his song by returning to the thought with which he began it, and gives the reason for the *Hallelujah* prefixed to it.

PSALM CXII.

112 Praise ye the LORD.
(א) Blessed *is* the man *that* feareth the LORD,

1. Happy is *the man* that *feareth* Jehovah] This Psalm takes up and expands the last verse of the preceding Psalm. The secret and source of all true happiness and prosperity is the fear of Jehovah, which leads to a cheerful and thorough obedience to His commandments.

(ב) *That* delighteth greatly in his commandments.
(ג) His seed shall be mighty upon earth:
(ד) The generation of the upright shall be blessed.
(ה) Wealth and riches *shall be* in his house:
(ו) And his righteousness endureth for ever.
(ז) Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness:
(ח) *He is* gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.

that *delighteth*] A reminiscence of i. 2. Cp. xl. 8; cxix. 35, 97. It is the same word as in cxi. 2.

2. *His seed* &c.] His posterity shall be powerful in the land. Cp. xxv. 13; xxxvii. 9, 11. *Gibbōr* generally means *valiant* in war, but is here used for the sake of the acrostic, in the wider sense of powerful by wealth and position.

the generation of the upright] Lit. *a generation of upright men*, the descendants of the man who fears Jehovah, parallel to and synonymous with *his seed*.

3. *Wealth* &c.] Cp. Prov. iii. 16; viii. 18.

his righteousness standeth fast *for ever*] Here and in *v.* 9 the words which are used in cxi. 3 of God are applied to the godly man. They may be understood to mean that the character of the godly man is a reflection of the character of God: but the parallelism suggests that here, as in xxiv. 5 (where *righteousness* answers to *blessing*), *righteousness* is nearly equivalent to the reward of righteousness (cp. Ezek. xviii. 20; Is. lviii. 8). The unbroken prosperity of the godly is the verdict of approval which God pronounces upon his character and conduct. Cp. Is. lxv. 23.

4. It is possible to understand this verse of Jehovah, *He ariseth as a light in the darkness to the upright, being gracious*, &c. But it seems clear from the general tenor of the Psalm that the epithets applied to God in cxi. 4 are here applied to the godly man. Cp. Matt. v. 48; Lk. vi. 36[1]. The verse may be rendered

There ariseth a light in the darkness for the upright,
(For him that is) gracious, compassionate, and righteous.

Cp. xcvii. 11; and the striking parallel in Is. lviii. 10, where the dawn of prosperity after the night of trouble is promised as the reward of merciful conduct. But 'the upright' is plural, while throughout the Psalm the godly man is spoken of in the singular (*v.* 2 is not an exception, for the plural there refers to his descendants), and the construction is harsh. It seems best therefore to render,

He ariseth as a light in the darkness for the upright,
Being gracious, compassionate, and righteous.

The 'upright' are the poor but godly whom he befriends in their need (*vv.* 5, 9), reflecting the attributes of God in his dealings with his fellow-men.

[1] The LXX here has οἰκτίρμων καὶ οἰκτίρμων, the word is used in Matt. v. 7, Lk. vi. 36: cp. Heb. ii. 17; James v. 11.

5 (ט) A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth:
(י) He will guide his affairs with discretion.
6 (כ) Surely he shall not be moved for ever:
(ל) The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.
7 (מ) He shall not be afraid of evil tidings:
(נ) His heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.
8 (ס) His heart *is* established, he shall not be afraid,
(ע) Until he see *his desire* upon his enemies.
9 (פ) He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor;
(צ) His righteousness endureth for ever;
(ק) His horn shall be exalted with honour.

5 *A good man sheweth favour*] Well is it with the man that dealeth graciously. The A.V. is ungrammatical, and misses the connexion with the preceding verse. Cp. xxxvii. 21, 26.

he will guide his affairs with discretion] Or, who manages his affairs with rectitude (Heb. *judgement*). So Symm., οἰκονομεῖ τὰ πράγματα αὐτοῦ μετὰ κρίσεως. He takes care to injure no one in the conduct of his business. Cp. cxl. 7. R.V. and most commentators render, he shall maintain his cause in judgement. But the right line introduced is incongruous. Why should the just and liberal man be brought into court at all?

6. *For* (giving the reason for *Well is it* of *v.* 5) he shall never be moved. He will enjoy firm and unshaken prosperity. Cp. xv. 5; lv. 22; Prov. x. 30.

the righteous &c.] Cp. Prov. x. 7; Ecclus. xliv. 1—15. The line corresponds to cxl. 4 *a*. As God has made Himself remembered by His marvellous works, so the godly man is held in remembrance for his acts of mercy.

7. Since he has a clear conscience and a quiet trust, he is not tortured by presentiments of evil, like the wicked man, Job xv. 20 ff.; Prov. x. 24.

fixed] i.e. steadfast, as lvii. 7.

8. *established*] Cp. cxi. 8; Is. xxvi. 3, where the word for *trusting* used in *v.* 7 also occurs.

until &c.] If he is attacked he is confident that in due time his cause, which is the cause of God and right, will triumph. Cp. xci. 8.

9. *He hath dispersed*] Of liberal, open-handed, distribution of wealth, in Prov. xi. 24.

his righteousness &c.] As in *v.* 3. "How little these words are contrary to the Christian consciousness is shewn by St Paul's citation of them in 2 Cor. ix. 9, where he applies them for the encouragement of Christian beneficence" (Delitzsch).

his horn &c.] Cp. 1 Sam. ii. 1; and see note on Ps. xcii. 10.

(ר) The wicked shall see *it*, and be grieved;
(ש) He shall gnash *with* his teeth, and melt away:
(ת) The desire of the wicked shall perish.

10. The wicked looks on in impotent rage and is consumed with vexation. While "the desire of the righteous is granted" (Prov. x. 24), his desire comes to nought. The end of the Psalm, like the beginning, is an echo of Ps. i.

PSALM CXIII.

Psalms cxiii—cxviii form the *Hallel*, or Hymn of Praise, which according to Jewish liturgical usage is sung at the three great Festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, at the Festival of the Dedication, and at the New Moons (with the exception of the New Year). At the domestic celebration of the Passover, Pss. cxiii, cxiv are sung before the meal, Pss. cxv—cxviii after it, when the fourth cup has been filled. It was probably the hymn sung by our Lord and His disciples before they left the upper chamber (Matt. xxvi. 30; Mk. xiv. 26). This group of Psalms is also called the *Egyptian Hallel* (cxiv. 1).

The term *Great Hallel* is also used, but ancient Jewish authorities were not agreed as to its meaning. According to one view it denoted Ps. cxxxvi; according to another, Pss. cxx—cxxxvi; according to a third, Pss. cxxxv, cxxxvi. (Levy-Fleischer, *Neuhebr. Wörterbuch*, i. 473 *a*.)

The choice of three Psalms from the Hallel (cxiii, cxiv, cxviii) as the Proper Psalms for Evensong on Easter Day marks the connexion of the Christian Festival with the Jewish Festival which it succeeded.

This Psalm evidently belongs to the post-exilic period, and expresses the gratitude of Israel for its restoration from the Captivity. It is "a connecting link between the Song of Hannah and the Magnificat of the Virgin" (Bp Perowne).

It is a call to praise Jehovah, Who, though enthroned in majesty in heaven, condescends to care for the weak and lowly on the earth. It consists of three equal stanzas.

i. A call to the universal and unceasing praise of Jehovah (1—3).
ii. His exaltation and condescension (4—6).
iii. Instances of His condescension (7—9).

Praise ye the LORD. 113
Praise, O ye servants of the LORD,

1—3. A call to praise Jehovah's name universally and unendingly.

1. For the structure of the verse with repetition of the verb cp. xxix. 1. The same words recur in different order in cxxxv. 1.

O ye servants of the LORD] True Israelites, who as individuals answer to the calling of Israel to be "the servant of Jehovah" (cxxxvi. 22; Is. xli. 8, 9; *al.*). Cp. lxix. 36; Is. liv. 17.

Praise the name of the LORD.
2 Blessed be the name of the LORD
From this time forth and for evermore.
3 From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same
The LORD's name *is* to be praised.
4 The LORD *is* high above all nations,
And his glory above the heavens.
5 Who *is* like unto the LORD our God,
Who dwelleth on high,
6 Who humbleth *himself* to behold
The things that are in heaven, and in the earth?
7 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,
And lifteth the needy out of the dunghill;

the name of Jehovah, emphatically repeated thrice, is more significant than *Jehovah* simply would be. It is the comprehensive expression for His whole revelation of Himself, which is the object and ground of His servants' praise.

3. *From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same*] Throughout the world from east to west (ch. i). Cp. Mal. i. 11; Zeph. iii. 9.

4—6. The ground of praise, Jehovah's exaltation and condescension.

4 *a*. Cp. xcix. 2.
4 *b*. Cp. lvii. 5, 11; viii. 1.
5 *a*. Cp. Ex. xv. 11; Deut. iii. 24.

5 *b*, 6. The structure of these lines—in. *Who exalteth himself to sit, Who humbleth himself to see in heaven and in earth*—makes it probable that *in heaven* and *in earth* belong to the two preceding lines respectively. Keble's paraphrase expresses it excellently,

"Exalting still His holy place,
Low bending still His eye of grace,
In heaven above, in earth below."

The point is Jehovah's condescension. Though He sits enthroned on high in heaven, yet He stoops to regard the earth. He is not "careless of mankind," as heathen gods were often supposed to be. For the thought cp. cxxxviii. 6; Is. lvii. 15.

7—9. Examples of Jehovah's gracious condescension.

7, 8. The first three lines are taken from the Song of Hannah, 1 Sam. ii. 8, with only a slight variation of form in two words. "To sit in the dust" (Is. xlvii. 1), or "on the dunghill" (Lam. iv. 5) is an oriental metaphor for a condition of extreme degradation and misery. Cp. Job ii. 8. The dung and other rubbish of an Eastern town or village is collected outside it in a heap called the *Mezveh*. On this

That *he* may set *him* with princes,
Even with the princes of his people.
He maketh the barren *woman* to keep house, 9
To be a joyful mother of children.
Praise ye the LORD.

"the outcast who has been stricken with some loathsome malady and is not allowed to enter the dwellings of men, lays himself down, begging an alms of the passers-by by day, and by night sheltering himself among the ashes which the heat of the sun has warmed." Wetzstein in Delitzsch's *Comm. on Job*, p. 62, quoted in Prof. Davidson's *Comm. on Job*, in this Series, p. 14.

8. 'To dwell' or 'sit with princes' is a figure for elevation to the highest rank and dignity[1]. So Job xxxvi. 7, "[God] withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous: but with kings upon the throne he setteth them for ever, and they are exalted." Cp. 2 Sam. ix. 7.

9. He maketh the barren housewife to dwell
As a joyful mother of sons.

He gives her a secure and happy position in her home. The reference in vv. 6, 7 to the Song of Hannah suggests this further reference to the experience of Hannah, as an instance of the way in which Jehovah has compassion on those who are despised. But doubtless under the figure of the once childless wife gladdened with a family of sons the Psalmist intends to allude to Zion. Cp. Is. liv. 1; lxvi. 8. So the Targum: "Who maketh the congregation of Israel, which was like a barren woman mourning for the men of her household, to be full of crowds, like a mother who rejoiceth over sons."

Praise ye the LORD] In the LXX this Hallelujah is transferred, perhaps rightly, to the beginning of Ps. cxiv. See on civ. 35.

PSALM CXIV.

This exquisite little poem treats a familiar subject with consummate artistic skill and singular freshness and force. For perfection of form and dramatic vividness it is almost if not quite unrivalled in the Psalter. It consists of four stanzas of two verses each. In each stanza one dominant thought is presented in the fewest but most expressive words; and in each verse the law of parallelism (*Introd.* p. lxi) is strictly observed.

i. The Exodus from Egypt was the birthday of Israel as the people of Jehovah (1, 2).

ii. Miracles marked their progress. Natural obstacles voluntarily made way for them: the solid mountains trembled (3, 4).

[1] According to the Massoretic text the *Chireq compaginis* or binding vowel, which is characteristic of this Psalm (*vv.* 5, 6, 7, 9), is here attached to the infinitive. But it is almost certain that, with the LXX, להושיבו 'to set *him*,' should be read for להושיבי.

iii. And why? The past becomes present to the poet's mind, and he challenges Nature for the reason (5, 6).

iv. It was before its Lord and Master that earth trembled then. But instead of answering the question directly he answers it by implication, bidding earth tremble still as it trembled then before the Almighty God, Who can transform its most stubborn elements for the service of His people (7, 8).

The Psalm belongs to the period of the Return. The deliverance of Israel from Babylon was a second Exodus, a new birth of the nation. At such a time it was natural to dwell on the great memories of the past as an encouragement for the present and the future. It is a companion and sequel to Ps. cxiii, and may have been written by the same author[1]. Ps. cxiii celebrates Jehovah's condescending love in helping the afflicted: Ps. cxiv recalls the most signal instance of it in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Both Psalms may have been composed for use at the Passover, and not merely adopted for such use.

Dante places this Psalm in the mouth of the spirits on their passage to Purgatory (*Purg.* c. ii. 46), interpreting it mystically of the exodus of the soul from the bondage of the flesh into the rest of God. Upon this interpretation also rests its use from the sixth century onward in the Western Church in the last offices for the dying and at the burial of the dead. It is most fitly appointed as a Proper Psalm for Easter Day, not only because it formed part of the Hallel, but because the deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt which it celebrates was typical of the greater deliverance from the bondage of sin, which was wrought through Christ's Resurrection.

The LXX, perhaps rightly, transfers the *Hallelujah* from the end of Ps. cxiii to the beginning of this Ps.

114 When Israel went out of Egypt,
The house of Jacob from a people of strange language;

1, 2. When Jehovah brought Israel out of Egypt He separated them from all other nations to be a holy people over which He Himself designed to rule.

1. *When Israel went* forth *out of Egypt*] LXX ἐν ἐξόδῳ Ἰσραὴλ ἐξ Αἰγύπτου, *In the exodus of Israel from Egypt*; Vulg. *In exitu Israel.*

a people of strange language] The Egyptian language was unintelligible to Israelites (Gen. xlii. 23). In the ancient world difference of language emphasised difference of race; and a stranger was presumably an enemy. The tyranny of oppressors seemed to be aggravated by the barrier which difference of language placed between them and their victims. Cp. Deut. xxviii. 49; Is. xxviii. 11; xxxiii. 19. The Greek word *barbăros* (used by the LXX here) which originally meant simply a foreigner as one who spoke unintelligibly came gradually to bear the modern sense of *barbarous*.

[1] The final *i* which is characteristic of Ps. cxiii appears in cxiv together with a similar final *o*.

Judah was his sanctuary,
And Israel his dominion.

The sea saw *it*, and fled:
Jordan was driven back.
The mountains skipped like rams,
And the little hills like lambs.

What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest?

2. Judah became his sanctuary,
Israel his dominion (R.V.).

The division of the lines is rhythmical not logical. Israel became Jehovah's sanctuary and dominion. No contrast is intended between Judah and Israel, as though one was preeminent as the centre of religious life, the other as the chief civil power, but for the sake of the parallelism the whole nation is designated by its two principal divisions in later times as in 1 Kings iv. 20, and often. By His act of Redemption Jehovah consecrated it to be His dwelling place, and marked His choice of it as His kingdom. See the fundamental passage in Ex. xix. 3—6; and cp. Ex. xv. 13, 16; Deut. iv. 20; vii. 6 ff.; xxxii. 9 ff.; 1 Kings viii. 51; Hos. xiii. 4; Am. iii. 1, 2; Jer. ii. 2, 3: &c.

It is commonly noted as an indication of the poet's art that the simple pronoun *His* is used, and the name of God not introduced till v. 7, as though to excite the reader's curiosity. The suggestion is fanciful. "The whole of the preceding Psalm had been saying *who* the object of their praise was" (Kay); and the two Psalms were probably intended to be used liturgically together, as we know they actually were used. Moreover *Hallelujah* preceded the Psalm as in the LXX, and supplied the antecedent for the pronoun.

3, 4. The wonders of the Exodus from Egypt and the Entry into Canaan.

3. The sea saw and fled;
The Jordan turned backwards.

In the parallel passages lxxvii. 16, Hab. iii. 10, *God* is the object of the verb *saw*. But here the object is significantly left unexpressed. The whole spectacle of Israel's triumphant Exodus is meant. The Red Sea and the Jordan are personified, and represented as hastening to withdraw the barriers they opposed to Israel's exit from Egypt and entrance into Canaan. Awe-struck Nature recognised and obeyed its Master's Will.

4. A poetical description of the earthquake which accompanied the giving of the Law at Sinai (Ex. xix. 18; cp. Jud. v. 4; Ps. lxviii. 8). For the figure cp. xxix. 6.

5, 6. The past becomes present to the poet's mind, and he challenges Nature to explain its behaviour.

The A.V. misses the vividness of the Hebrew tenses. Render:

Thou Jordan, *that* thou wast driven back?
6 Ye mountains, *that* ye skipped like rams;
And ye little hills, like lambs?

7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord,
At the presence of the God of Jacob;
8 Which turned the rock *into* a standing water,
The flint into a fountain of waters.

What aileth thee, thou sea, that thou fleest?
Thou Jordan, that thou turnest back?
Ye mountains, that ye skip like rams?
Ye hills, like young sheep?

7, 8. It was at Jehovah's presence that earth trembled then; but instead of a formal answer the poet's words take a wider range, and he bids earth tremble still at the presence of its Lord, Who proves His sovereignty by transforming its most stubborn elements for the benefit of His people.

7. Cp. xcvii. 4, 5. *The Lord* (*Ādōn*) denotes Jehovah as the Ruler of the world. He it is and no other Who is the God of Jacob.

8. *Which turned* &c.] Who turneth the rock into a pool of water. The participle in the Heb. is independent of time. It denotes not merely a historic fact but an attribute expressed in the terms of historic fact. He Who made water flow from the rock in Rephidim and the cliff in Kadesh (Ex. xvii. 6; Num. xx. 8 ff.; cp. Ps. lxxviii. 15, 16, 20) can still provide streams of blessing for His people. The verse combines reminiscences of Is. xli. 18 ('pool of water,' 'fountain'), and Deut. viii. 15 ('flint'): cp. Ps. cvii. 35.

PSALM CXV.

i. In a time of national humiliation Israel supplicates Jehovah to vindicate the honour of His name by raising His people from their degradation. Why should the heathen be allowed to mock, when Israel knows Him to be supreme and omnipotent (1—3)?

ii. How utterly different is He from the speechless, powerless idols which the heathen make and call gods: gods which must drag down their worshippers to their own level of senselessness and impotence (4—8).

iii. Exhortations to trust Jehovah and await His blessing (9—13).

iv. Prayers for blessing and resolves to praise Jehovah (14—18).

This Psalm was probably composed for use in the Temple services after the Return from Babylon, perhaps when the first flush of enthusiasm had died away, and the little community in Jerusalem realised how contemptibly weak it was in the eyes of its neighbours (Ezra iii. 3; iv. 1 ff.), perhaps at a later period (Neh. iv. 1—5); but the sarcastic description of idols in *vv.* 4 ff. points rather to the earlier time, when

the memories of Babylonian idolatry were still fresh. Israel's sense of its own weakness adds strength to its faith in Jehovah, to Whom alone it can look for help and protection.

The precise manner in which the Psalm was intended to be sung cannot be determined with certainty. *Vv.* 1–8 may have been sung by the choir of Levites; *vv.* 9*a*, 10*a*, 11*a* by the precentor, answered in *vv.* 9*b*, 10*b*, 11*b* by the choir; and *vv.* 12—18 by the choir. But it is not improbable that *vv.* 12—15 at any rate were distributed between the two halves of the choir. An allusion to such antiphonal singing is found in Ezra iii. 11. The priests and Levites "sang one to another (lit. *answered*) in praising and giving thanks unto Jehovah." Cp. Neh. xii. 40.

The opening words of the Psalm, though properly a prayer, have commonly been used as a thanksgiving, as by Henry V after Agincourt[1]:

"Do we all holy rites;
Let there be sung 'Non nobis' and 'Te Deum.'"
Shakespeare, *Henry V.*, iv. 8. 128.

In some Heb. MSS and in the LXX and versions dependent on or influenced by it (Vulg., Arab., Aeth., Syr., Theodotion, Jerome) this Psalm is united with Ps. cxiv. But in tone, structure, and style the two Psalms are quite distinct and cannot originally have been one.

Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, 115
But unto thy name give glory,
For thy mercy, *and* for thy truth's sake.

1—3. An appeal to God to vindicate His honour by succouring His people.

1. *Not unto us*] Strictly speaking, this is not a deprecation, but a protestation. 'Not for ourselves or for our own sake do we ask.' We have no merits of our own to plead; we do not ask for our own aggrandisement. *But unto thy name give glory*: work mightily on behalf of Thy people, and vindicate Thine honour, for if they are despised, Thy name is dishonoured. Cp. the similar plea in Dan. ix. 18, 19; and see Is. xlviii. 9, 11; Ezek. xx. 9, 14; xxxvi. 21—23.

for thy lovingkindness, and *for thy truth's sake*] If Jehovah does not interfere on behalf of His people, it must seem as though His fundamental attributes of love and faithfulness (Ex. xxxiv. 6), exemplified in His choice of Israel (Deut. vii. 7, 8), had vanished. Cp. lxxvii. 8, 9.

[1] "The king...gathering his armie togither, gaue thanks to almightie God for so happie a victorie, causing his prelats and chapleins to sing this psalme: 'In exitu Israel de Aegypto'; and commanded euerie man to kneele downe on the ground at this verse: '*Non nobis*, Domine, non nobis, sed nomini tuo da gloriam.'" Holinshed, quoted by Verity, *Henry V*, p. 227. In the Vulg. Pss. cxiv and cxv are one Psalm; the first part would have been sung for the dead and dying (see above, p. 680), and the second part as a thanksgiving.

2 Wherefore should the heathen say,
Where *is* now their God?

3 But our God *is* in the heavens:
He hath done whatsoever he pleased.
4 Their idols *are* silver and gold,
The work of men's hands.
5 They have mouths, but they speak not:
Eyes have they, but they see not:
6 They have ears, but they hear not:
Noses have they, but they smell not:
7 They *have* hands, but they handle not:
Feet *have* they, but they walk not:
Neither speak they through their throat.
8 They that make them are like unto them;
So is every one that trusteth in them.

2. So lxxix. 10. Cp. xlii. 3, 10; Ex. xxxii. 12; Num. xiv. 13 ff.; Joel ii. 17; Mic. vii. 10. *Now* does not mean at the present time as contrasted with the past, but is a particle emphasising the question. *where, prithee?*

3. *But*] Or, *Whereas*. Though its outward circumstances may seem to give ground for the taunts of the heathen, Israel knows that its God is supremely exalted and omnipotent. If His people suffer, it is because He wills it, not because He lacks power to help them. He does whatsoever He wills in chastisement (Is. liii. 10) and in redemption (Is. lv. 11). Cp. Wisdom xii. 18, "Thou, being sovereign over thy strength judgest in gentleness, and with great forbearance dost thou govern us; for the power is thine whensoever thou hast the will."

4—8. Do the heathen taunt us with the impotence of our God? What are their own gods? Nothing but their own handiwork, destitute of ordinary human senses, though represented with organs of sense. For similar sarcastic descriptions of idols and the contrast between them and the living God, see Is. xliv. 9—20; Jer. x. 1—16; Deut. iv. 28; Is. ii. 20; Hab. ii. 18, 19; Wisdom xv. 15. The passage recurs in Ps. cxxxv. 15—18. Observe how completely the Psalmist identifies the god with the image: it has no separate existence.

4. *Their idols*] i.e. the idols of the nations, as Ps. cxxxv. 15, and the LXX and Jerome here, read.

5, 6. They cannot teach their worshippers (Hab. ii. 19) or see their needs; they cannot hear prayers offered to them or smell the sweet savour of sacrifices. Jehovah, though He has no bodily form, can truly be said to speak (Is. i. 20) and see (Ps. cxiii. 6) and hear (Ps. vi. 8) and smell (Gen. viii. 21).

8. **Like unto them shall their makers become,**
Even everyone that trusteth in them.

O Israel, trust thou in the LORD:
He *is* their help and their shield.
O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD:
He *is* their help and their shield.
Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD:
He *is* their help and their shield.

Such gods bring down their worshippers to the same level of senseless stupidity: they must perish, for their protectors are powerless. Cp. 2 Kings xvii. 15; Is. xliv. 9, 10; Jer. ii. 5; Rom. i. 21—23.

9—13. An exhortation to Israel to trust Jehovah, Who will surely bless His people.

9. *Israel*] The LXX and Syr. have *house of Israel*, as in cxxxv. 19; hence the P.B.V.

He is their help and their shield] At first sight the transition to the third person seems awkward, and some of the Ancient Versions (LXX, Syr., Jer.) read the verb in the preceding line with different vowels in the third person, *The house of Israel trusteth in the Lord*. But this is less forcible, and the change of person may be explained by supposing that the first line in each of these verses was sung by the precentor, and that this refrain was the answer of the choir.

help and shield as in cxxxv. 20; cp. Deut. xxxiii. 29; Ps. iii. 3; xxviii. 7.

The threefold division 'Israel,' 'house of Aaron,' 'fearers of Jehovah,' recurs in cxviii. 2—4: in cxxxv. 19 ff. 'the house of Levi' is added. Israel as a whole is first addressed, then the religious leaders of the people, then the inner circle of those who are truly God-fearing: or perhaps the Psalmist assumes the reality of their devotion and addresses people and priests together as 'fearers of Jehovah.' Many commentators however hold that by 'fearers of Jehovah' are meant Gentile proselytes (1 Kings viii. 41; Is. lvi. 6). In the N.T. God-fearing Gentiles, who had attached themselves more or less closely to the faith and worship of Israel, are described as 'those who fear,' or 'reverence, God' (οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν Θεόν, οἱ σεβόμενοι τὸν Θεόν, or οἱ σεβόμενοι simply: Acts xiii. 16, 26; xvi. 14; xviii. 7; xvii. 17). But the general usage of the O.T., and of the Psalter in particular, makes it improbable that the phrase 'fearers of Jehovah' has this sense here. In the closely parallel passage, xxii. 23, it certainly denotes Israelites, whether it be understood as synonymous with the 'seed of Israel' or as designating an inner circle of true believers. The question is discussed by Prof. A. B. Davidson in the *Expository Times*, 1892. pp. 491 ff., who comes to the conclusion that "any reference to a Gentile element in the Palestinian community is wholly without probability." It seems evident from the words "both small and great" of v. 13 that it is not "some small section like Gentile proselytes" that is meant: and "the intensely national and even local spirit" of the next kindred Psalms (vv. 14: cxxxv. 21) forbids us to suppose that the Psalmist intended to include all who in every place acknowledged Jehovah.

12 The LORD hath been mindful of us: he will bless *us*:
He will bless the house of Israel;
He will bless the house of Aaron.
13 He will bless them that fear the LORD,
Both small and great.
14 The LORD shall increase you more and more,
You and your children.
15 You *are* blessed of the LORD
Which made heaven and earth.

16 The heaven, *even* the heavens, *are* the LORD'S:
But the earth hath he given to the children of men.
17 The dead praise not the LORD,
Neither any that go down into silence.

12. **Jehovah who hath remembered us will bless (us)**] By bringing them back from Babylon Jehovah proves that He had not forgotten His people (Is. xlix. 14, 15; Ps. xcviii. 3; cxxxvi. 23), and the Psalmist points to this deliverance as a pledge that He will still further bless them.

13. *both small and great*] One and all without distinction of rank or condition. Cp. Jer. vi. 13; xvi. 6; xxxi. 34.

14—18. Prayers for blessing and resolves to employ life in Jehovah's praise.

14. *The LORD shall increase you*] **Jehovah increase you**, add to your numbers (Deut. i. 11), a specially appropriate prayer for the little community of the returned exiles.

15. The prayer is still continued. **Blessed be ye of Jehovah. The designation Maker of heaven and earth** is characteristic of the later Psalms (cxxi. 2; cxxiv. 8; cxxxiv. 3; cxlvi. 6). It contrasts Jehovah the omnipotent Creator with the powerless idols of the heathen (Jer. x. 11; and often in Is. xl—lxvi). Here it also implies that He has the power to dispense the blessings of earth. Cp. also Is. xxxvii. 16; Ps. xcvi. 5; Neh. ix. 6.

16. The closing words of *v.* 15 are developed. **The heaven is Jehovah's heaven**; He has made it for His own dwelling-place (*v.* 3; ii. 4); He is "the God of heaven" (cxxxvi. 26; and often in the Aramaic of Ezra and Daniel). The LXX renders ungrammatically, 'the heaven of heaven' (Vulg. *caelum caeli*); hence P.B.V. 'all the whole heavens.'

the earth &c.] Cp. Is. xlv. 18.

17. From heaven the poet passes to earth, and from earth to Sheol, which here, as in xciv. 17, is termed '*silence*.' The dead raise no Hallelujahs; they are cut off from communion with God and from the power of rendering Him service of lip and life. For this gloomy view of the state of the dead cp. vi. 5; xxx. 9; lxxxviii. 4, 5, 10—12; Is. xxxviii.

But we will bless the LORD
From this time forth and for evermore.
Praise the LORD. 18

11. 18; and many passages in Job, e.g. vii. 9; x. 21 ff.; xiv: and see *Introd.* pp. xciii ff.

The verse is partly a stimulus to employ life rightly; partly (in effect) a plea, for if Jehovah suffers his people to perish, He will lose their praises.

18. **But we** (emphatic), we the living (as the LXX adds), **will bless Jah.** Cp. cxviii. 17; Is. xxxviii. 18 ff.

for evermore] In the spirit of faith the congregation sees no limit to the continuance of its existence or to its tribute of praise. What in the O.T. is a national hope becomes in the N.T. a personal hope.

The LXX and Jer. transfer the concluding *Hallelujah* to the beginning of Ps. cxvi.

PSALM CXVI.

i. 1. Answered prayer evokes love and lifelong praise (1—4).

2. Jehovah has proved Himself true to His revealed character by His gracious dealings with the Psalmist, who can now look forward to a prolonged life of tranquil service (5—9).

ii. 1. In his sorest trouble he had not lost faith, and now he will give thanks for Jehovah's mercy (10—14).

2. Jehovah's care for His beloved ones, illustrated by his recent experience, shall be gratefully acknowledged by the public performance of his vows and eucharistic sacrifices in the Temple (15—19).

The Psalm thus falls into two main divisions, each with two subdivisions. The LXX, followed by the Vulg., divides the Psalm into two, and according to their numeration *vv.* 1—9 form Ps. cxiv; *vv.* 10—19 form Ps. cxv. The separation of the Ps. into two is doubtless wrong, but it recognises that a fresh division begins at *v.* 10. 'I believed' corresponds to 'I love' in *v.* 1.

Ps. cxv is a congregational prayer; Ps. cxvi is an individual thanksgiving for deliverance from imminent danger of death. The language is general, and the precise nature of the danger does not appear: most likely it was sickness. In many points the Psalm reminds us of Hezekiah's thanksgiving (Is. xxxviii). But whatever it was, the danger had been extreme, and the thanksgiving is correspondingly earnest. The Psalmist was familiar with older Psalms, and freely adapts language from them (especially Pss. xviii, xxvii, xxxi, lvi) but gives it fresh force from the depths of his own recent experience.

The strong Aramaic colouring of the language[1], together with this free use of earlier Psalms, points to a late, possibly a very late, date.

[1] For the form of suffix in *v.* 7 cp. cii. 3 *ff.* That in *v.* 12 is the regular Aramaic form. See Ges.-Kautzsch, *Gramm.* § 91, 2. R. 2.

It is however hardly probable that the Hasmoneans of the Maccabæan period (1 Macc. vii. 13 ff.) are meant by the saints (*hasidim*) of *v.* 15.

Part of this Psalm is used in the office for the Thanksgiving of Women after Child-birth.

116 I love the LORD, because he hath heard
My voice *and* my supplications.
2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me,
Therefore will I call upon *him* as long as I live.
3 The sorrows of death compassed me,
And the pains of hell gat hold upon me:
I found trouble and sorrow.
4 Then called I upon the name of the LORD;
O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

1 2. Answered prayer demands lifelong love and gratitude

1. Lit. *I love, because Jehovah heareth my voice, even my supplications*: an unusual, but not impossible, form of expression for *I love Jehovah, because he heareth* &c. Cp. 1 John iv. 19 (R.V.) "We love, because he first loved us." Again in *v.* 2 (*I will call*), and *v.* 10 (*I believed*) the Psalmist employs verbs in a peculiar manner without an expressed object.

I love is a reminiscence of Ps. xviii. 1, though the Heb. word there is different. *My voice, even my supplications* is [if the text is sound] a slight variation from the usual phrase *the voice of my supplications* (xxviii. 2, 6; xxxi. 22; cxxx. 2; cxl. 6).

The P.B.V. *I am well pleased that the Lord* &c. is linguistically questionable and less forcible.

2. *Because...therefore*] Better **For...and.**

inclined his ear] Ps. xvii. 6 and often.

as long as I live] Lit. *in my days* (Is. xxxix. 8). Cp. Ps. lxiii. 4, *in my life.*

3, 4. The Psalmist's prayer in peril. Cp. xviii. 4—6.

3. **The cords of death encompassed me.**

And the straitnesses of Sheol gat hold of [lit. *found*] **me.**

The parallelism decides for the meaning *cords* in xviii. 5, though *pangs* (LXX ὠδῖνες) is also a possible rendering, and may be the meaning here. But here too Death and Sheol are probably represented as hunters lying in wait for their prey with nooses and nets, or driving it into a defile from which it cannot escape. Cp. Lam. i. 3.

The P.B.V. renders wrongly *I shall find...I will call.* The crisis is evidently past.

4. **the name of Jehovah**, more emphatically than *Jehovah* alone, denotes His revealed character (Ex. xxxiv. 5, 6) to which the Psalmist appealed, and not in vain.

Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous;
Yea, our God *is* merciful.
The LORD preserveth the simple:
I was brought low, and he helped me.
Return unto thy rest, O my soul;
For the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.
For thou hast delivered my soul from death,
Mine eyes from tears,
And my feet from falling.
I will walk before the LORD
In the land of the living.
I believed, therefore have I spoken:
I was greatly afflicted:

5, 6. The character of Jehovah, realised in the Psalmist's experience.

5. Cp. cxi. 4, and passages referred to there, all based on the fundamental passage, Ex. xxxiv. 6.

6. *the simple*] Those whose want of wisdom and experience exposes them to danger. Cp. xix. 7; cxix. 130. LXX τὰ νήπια, *babes*; cp. Matt. xi. 25.

I was brought low] Cp. lxxix. 8; cxlii. 6.

and he helped me] R.V. saved. Cp. *v.* 13.

7—9. The Psalmist encourages himself with the recollection of God's mercy.

7. *Return unto thy rest, O my soul*] Abandon anxiety and resume the perfect tranquility that springs from trust in God. The plural form of the word for *rest* denotes full and complete rest. For the address to the soul cp. xlii. 5, and ciii. 1 ff., a Psalm further connected with this Psalm by its use of Aramaic forms of pronominal suffix.

dealt bountifully] Cp. xiii. 6.

8, 9. Taken almost verbatim from lvi. 13 (hence the transition to the second person), with the change of *light* to *lands*, suggested by xxvii. 13. The free and joyous service of God in the land of life and light is the contrast to that paralysis of existence in Sheol which he had dreaded. Cp. Is. xxxviii. 3, 11.

10—14. Faith's triumph must be followed by grateful thanksgiving.

10, 11. In the extremity of his distress the Psalmist was compelled to recognise the delusiveness of human help, but he never lost faith in God. Such is the general sense, but the details of interpretation are doubtful. The A.V. *I believed, therefore have I spoken* follows the LXX (ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἐλάλησα), which is quoted by St Paul in 2 Cor. iv. 13; but this rendering must be abandoned as grammatically untenable. On the whole it seems best to render:

I believed [or as R.V. I believe], for I will speak:
I was exceedingly afflicted:

11 I said in my haste,
All men *are* liars.

12 What shall I render unto the LORD
For all his benefits towards me?
13 I will take the cup of salvation,
And call upon the name of the LORD.
14 I will pay my vows unto the LORD
Now in the presence of all his people.

I said in my alarm,
All men are deceitful.

I believed may be rendered absolutely, "I held fast to my faith in Jehovah": but the Psalmist evidently [illegible] still has in mind Ps. xxvii. 13 "I believe that I shall see the goodness of Jehovah in the land of the living," and the use of the word there suggests that the sense here should be completed from v. 9, "I believed that it would be so," viz. 'that I should walk before Jehovah in the lands of the living.' This faith he retained though he was grievously afflicted. Further, **I said in my alarm** is borrowed from xxxi. 22, where the Psalmist confesses that in his peril he "said" himself deserted by Jehovah. "I said in my alarm, I am cut off from before thine eyes." Is not our Psalmist tacitly contrasting his own faith with that earlier Psalmist's loss of faith? *He* had not ceased to trust in God, but he had learned not to depend on men.

Other renderings are, (1) *I believed, when I spake* (saying), *I am exceedingly afflicted*: i.e. I retained my confidence even when I complained of the severity of my sufferings, and found myself deserted by men. Or (2) *I was confident that I should speak (thus), but as for me, I was sore afflicted*: i.e. "he was fully convinced that he would sooner or later have to record thanksgivings for deliverance, such as v. 8—9" (Cheyne).

all men are *liars*] Cp. lx. 11; lxii. 9; Rom. iii. 4.

12. 'Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus quae retribuit mihi?' was the question which Richard of Bury, bishop of Durham 1334—1345, the most learned man of his country and age, asked himself repeatedly, and answered by making a profession for a band of poor scholars to serve God and His Church. See Lightfoot's *Leaders of the Northern Church*, p. 105.

13. *the cup of salvation*] I.e. *salvation*; the cup to be drunk as a part of the sacrifice of thanksgiving (*v.* 14) for great and manifold deliverance. Cp. 'the cup of blessing' in the service of the Passover (Matt. xxvi. 27).

call upon] Rather proclaim the name of Jehovah, acknowledging that to Him alone is my gratitude due.

14. This verse which is repeated as *v.* 18 is omitted in the best MSS of the LXX, and may have been inserted here by mistake. Its omission would make the stanza *vv.* 10—13 agree in length with the corresponding stanza *vv.* 1—4; still, the repeated resolution of thanksgiving is not out of place.

Precious in the sight of the LORD
Is the death of his saints.
Oh LORD, truly I *am* thy servant;
I *am* thy servant, *and* the son of thy handmaid
Thou hast loosed my bonds.
I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving,
And will call upon the name of the LORD.
I will pay my vows unto the LORD
Now in the presence of all his people,
In the courts of the LORD'S house,
In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.
Praise ye the LORD.

15 19. Jehovah's care for His beloved ones has been illustrated in the Psalmist's experience, and for these mercies he will give public thanks in the Temple.

15. *Precious &c.*] Their death is not a matter of indifference to Him. Cp. lxxii. 14. Babylas bishop of Antioch, who was martyred in the Decian persecution, met his death singing these words.

his saints] His beloved, or his godly ones. See Appendix, Note I.

16. Lit. *I beseech thee, Jehovah, for I am thy servant.* The precative interjection would naturally be followed by an imperative, as in 4 *b*, *near me*, or the like; but the Psalmist breaks off into thanksgiving.

thy servant, [omit and] the son of thy handmaid] So lxxxvi. 16. 'The son of thy handmaid' is a synonym for 'thy servant,' but denoting a closer relationship, for servants 'born in the house' (Gen. xiv. 14) were the most trusted dependents. Cp. 'of the household of God,' Eph. ii. 19. It is hardly, as Delitzsch thinks, an allusion to the piety of the Psalmist's mother.

loosed my bonds] He had been like a prisoner condemned to death, *v.* 3. Cp. cvii. 10, 14.

17. Unto thee will I offer, and proclaim the name of Jehovah, as *v.* 13.

sacrifice of thanksgiving] See Lev. vii. 11 ff.

18. As in xxii. 25 stress is laid upon the *public* confession of gratitude. Cp. lxvi. 13.

19. *Praise ye the LORD*] Hallelujah, probably, with LXX, to be transferred to the beginning of Ps. cxvii.

PSALM CXVII.

The shortest of the Psalms is one of the grandest. Its invitation to all nations to join in praising Jehovah for His goodness to Israel is virtually a recognition that the ultimate object of Israel's calling was the salvation of the world. Cp. Ps. lxvii; xxii. 27; lxxxvi. 9. It is in

the truest sense a Messianic Psalm, and it is quoted by St Paul in Rom. xv. 11 as one of the Scriptures written for all the extension of God's mercy to the Gentiles in Christ.

The occasion of the Psalm may have been the restoration of Israel from exile (*cp.* xcviii. 2, *g*), or some subsequent special proof of God's goodness towards His people.

Owing to its brevity it is joined to the preceding or the following Psalm in many MSS; but it is not suitable either as the conclusion of the one, or as the beginning of the other.

117 O praise the LORD, all ye nations:
Praise him, all ye people.
2 For his merciful kindness is great toward us:
And the truth of the LORD *endureth* for ever.
Praise ye the LORD.

1. Praise Jehovah, all ye nations,
Laud him all ye peoples.

Two different words for *praise* are used.

2. For mighty hath been his lovingkindness toward us] Mighty as Israel's transgressions have been (lxv. 3), God's mercy has been mightier (ciii. 11, 12; *cp.* Rom. v. 20; 1 Tim. i. 14). Lovingkindness and truth are fundamental attributes of Jehovah's character (cxv. 1, and often). St Paul unites them in the proposition in support of which he quotes *v.* 1. "I say that Christ hath been made a minister of the circumcision for the *truth* of God, that he might confirm the promises given unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his *mercy*" (Rom. xv. 8, 9).

PSALM CXVIII.

In this, the last of the Hallel Psalms, the spirit of jubilant thanksgiving finds fullest utterance. The speaker is Israel, or a representative of Israel, who speaks in the name of the nation (*vv.* 10 ff.). As of old upon the shores of the Red Sea the people gave thanks as one man for their miraculous deliverance, so now they give thanks once more. As upon that occasion the dominant motive of their song was the realisation that to Jehovah alone they owed their deliverance, so now it is again (*vv.* 14, 23). Now as of old they feel that this deliverance is nothing less than a miracle; and the conviction has given them a fresh sense of the solidarity and continuity of their national life, and of the greatness of Israel's destiny in the counsels of Jehovah (*vv.* 17, 22).

All Israel, priests and people alike, are bidden to join in praising Jehovah for His lovingkindness (1—4). It is He alone Who is the Deliverer and Strength of His people (5—9). The nations round about have plotted to destroy Israel, but in vain; once more as of old Jehovah has proved Himself their Saviour (10—14), and glad thanksgivings celebrate the renewal of the national life (15—18). The solemn pro-

cession of worshippers approaches the Temple gates proclaiming the greatness of the miracle which Jehovah has wrought for them (19—24). With Hosannas and benedictions and thanksgivings the service is consummated in the Temple courts (25—29).

The Psalm was evidently intended to be sung by the procession of worshippers on their way to the Temple upon some special occasion of national rejoicing. Doubtless it was sung antiphonally, in the manner described in Ezra iii. 11, choir answering choir: but the precise distribution of the parts between the different choirs or voices cannot be determined with certainty. *Vv.* 1—4 however may have been sung as the procession started, the first line of each verse by the leader or a part of the choir, the refrain by the full chorus, and *vv.* 5—18 on the way to the Temple in a similar manner, the refrains at any rate being taken up by the full chorus. *V.* 19 is obviously the challenge of the procession as it approaches the Temple, and *v.* 20 the response of the priests from within. *Vv.* 21—25 may have been sung as the procession entered the Temple courts; *v.* 26 is the blessing with which the priests greet it; and *vv.* 27—29 may perhaps best be assigned to the procession and its leader.

It is generally agreed that the Psalm belongs to the post-exilic period, and that it must have been composed for some special and notable occasion. This occasion cannot have been the Feast of Tabernacles in the first year of the Return (Ezra iii. 1—4) or the laying of the foundation stone of the Temple in the following year (Ezra iii. 8 ff.); for *vv.* 19, 20 presume the existence of the Temple. Rather we might think of the Dedication of the Temple in B.C. 516, or the Passover which followed it (Ezra vi. 15 ff.). But the most probable view is that which connects the Psalm with the great celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles recorded in Neh. viii. In spite of the sneers of Sanballat and Tobiah, and the active hostility of the neighbouring tribes, the repair of the walls of Jerusalem had been successfully completed. The work was finished on the 25th day of the month Elul in the 21st year of Artaxerxes (B.C. 444). Nehemiah concludes his narrative with the words; "And it came to pass, when all our enemies heard thereof, that all the nations that were about us feared, and were much cast down in their own eyes; and they perceived that this work was wrought of our God" (vi. 16). In the following month (Tisri) the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated with exceptional rejoicings. "There was exceeding great gladness" (Neh. viii. 14—18). The triumphant joyousness of the Psalm, its thanksgivings for recent deliverance from the hostility of surrounding enemies, its vivid consciousness that this deliverance is due to Jehovah's help alone, correspond strikingly to the circumstances and feelings of that time, as they are delineated in the Book of Nehemiah.

The very words of *v.* 25 of the Psalm occur in the prayer of Nehemiah (i. 11) and nowhere else, and several other striking resemblances of thought and language between the Psalm and the Book of Nehemiah will be noticed. The metaphor from building (*v.* 22) would naturally have been suggested by the recent building of the walls. And lastly, the connexion of the Psalm with the Feast of Tabernacles is corroborated by the historical use of the Psalm at that Festival. "In the time

of the Second Temple *v.* 25 formed the recital with which the altar of burnt offering was compassed in solemn procession, once on each of the first six days of the Feast of Tabernacles, and seven times on the seventh day. This seventh day was called 'the Great Hosanna' (*Hosanna Rabba*); and not only the prayers of the Feast of Tabernacles but even the branches of willow and myrtle bound up with the palm branch (*Lulab*) were called *Hosannas* (Delitzsch). But Ewald does not speak too strongly when he says, "I believe it may be said with confidence that Ps. cxviii was sung for the first time at the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles in the year B.C. 444."

Cheyne thinks that "the exuberant spirit of correspondence and martial ardour in the Psalm" points to the purification and consecration of the Temple by Judas the Maccabee in B.C. 165 (1 Macc. iv. 37—59; 2 Macc. x. 1—7). Venema, followed by Hengstenberg, assigns it to the time when Simon drove the Syrians out of the Acra, and celebrated the triumph with signal rejoicings (1 Macc. xiii. 51; xiv. 27). But the Psalm breathes a freer spirit than might have been expected at the time when the Temple was still dominated by the Syrian garrison in the Acra; and the profession of *vv.* 8, 9 is hardly consistent with the eagerness of the Jews for alliance with Rome and Sparta.

The Psalm was Luther's favourite Psalm. "Though the whole Psalter," he wrote, "and all Holy Scripture is dear to me, as my rule count it is life, this Psalm has been of special service to me. It has helped me out of many great troubles, when neither Emperor nor kings nor wise men nor saints could help" (Tholuck).

It is appointed as one of the Proper Psalms for Easter Day, partly doubtless because it formed part of the Hallel sung at the Passover, but still more because of the reference of *v.* 22 to Christ, and the obvious appropriateness of much of its language, especially *vv.* 23, 24 to the triumph of the Resurrection.

118 O give thanks unto the LORD, for *he is* good:
Because his mercy *endureth* for ever.
2 Let Israel now say,
That his mercy *endureth* for ever.
3 Let the house of Aaron now say,
That his mercy *endureth* for ever.

1—4. An introductory call to all Israel to join in praising Jehovah for His unfailing goodness.

1. As cvi. 1 (see notes); cvii. 1; Ezra iii. 11.

because his mercy &c.] For his lovingkindness &c.

2 *b*. For the threefold division 'Israel,' house of Aaron, 'fearers of Jehovah,' cp. cxv. 9—13, and notes there.

Israel] The LXX as in cxv. 9 reads *the house of Israel*, and adds after *say* in *vv.* 2, 3, 4, *that he is good*. Hence P.B.V. with the Vulg. in *v.* 2, 'Let Israel now confess, *that he is gracious*.'

Let them now that fear the LORD say,
That his mercy *endureth* for ever. 4

I called upon the LORD in distress: 5
The LORD answered me, *and set me* in a large place.
The LORD *is* on my side; I will not fear: 6
What can man do unto me?
The LORD taketh my part with them that help me: 7
Therefore shall I see *my desire* upon them that hate me.
It is better to trust in the LORD 8
Than to put confidence in man.
It is better to trust in the LORD 9
Than to put confidence in princes.
All nations compassed me about: 10

5—9. Israel speaks as one man; acknowledging that it is Jehovah Who has delivered them. With Him as their ally they have nothing to fear.

5. Out of the straitness in which I was I called upon Jah:
Jah answered me (and set me) in a wide place.

I.e. had been hemmed in and harassed by enemies (Neh. iv. 7 ff.): they prayed (Neh. iv. 9), and were set free to move and act without fear or hindrance. Cp. xvii. 19; xxxi. 8. The name *Jah* is perhaps chosen here and in *vv.* 14, 17, 18, 19, in order to recall the memories of the Exodus. See *v.* 14[1].

6. From lvi. 9, 11. Cited in Heb. xiii. 6.

7. Jehovah is on my side as my helper] Cp. liv. 4. The expression is an idiomatic one. It denotes not merely *among my helpers*, as one among many, but 'in the character or capacity of my helpers,' as a host of helpers.' "He sums up in Himself the qualities of a class, viz. the class of helpers" (Cheyne).

therefore shall I see &c.] Or, do I see, a general truth. Cp. liv. 7 *b*, and note; lix. 10; xcii. 11.

8, 9. It is good to take refuge in Jehovah, and not to put trust in men (in princes) Cp. cxlvi. 3; cxvi. 9; lxii; and for the construction, see note on lii. 3. Artaxerxes had given Nehemiah letters to the Persian governors, and an escort of cavalry (Neh. ii. 7—9), but these did not prevent the hostility of Tobiah and Sanballat. Repeatedly Nehemiah ascribes the frustration of their plots to the direct interposition of God.

10—14. It was in the strength of Jehovah that Israel was enabled to repel the persistent attacks of its enemies.

10. *All nations &c.*] Compare "all the nations that were about us,"

[1] The A.V. and R.V. follow the Eastern or Babylonian reading in repeating *Jah* in the second line. The Massora, according to the Western or Palestinian recension, makes the syllable *jah* simply the termination of the preceding word.

But in the name of the LORD will I destroy them.
11 They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about:
But in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.
12 They compassed me about like bees;
They are quenched as the fire of thorns:
For in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.
13 Thou hast thrust sore at me that *I* might fall:
But the LORD helped me.
14 The LORD *is* my strength and song,
And is become my salvation.
15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation *is* in the tabernacles of the righteous:

Neh. vi 16. Arabians, Ammonites, and Philistines of Ashdod, are specially mentioned in Neh. iv. 7 f. Cp. also Ezra iv. 7—23, referring probably to an earlier period in the reign of Artaxerxes.

but in the name &c.] In the name of Jehovah, trusting that He would prove Himself all that He has promised, I did cut them off. The exact meaning of the verb is uncertain. The tense is a 'graphic imperfect.' From *vv.* 5, 13 it is clear that the crisis was past and the victory won.

12. *like bees*] Cp. Deut. i. 44.

they were extinguished as a fire of thorns] The sudden collapse of their rage is compared to a fire of thorns which blazes up fiercely and then rapidly dies down. But the form of the preceding verses and the following line lead us to expect a climax in the description of their hostility rather than a description of their extinction, and the LXX may have preserved the true text:

They came about me like bees about wax;
They blazed like a fire among thorns;
In the name of Jehovah, I cut them off.

The corruption of the Massoretic text is most ingeniously explained by Baethgen. The Targ. 'burning like a fire among thorns,' seems to preserve a reminiscence of this reading. Aq. Symm. Jer. Syr. follow the Mass. text.

13. *Thou didst thrust sore at me*] The community as an individual addresses its enemies as an individual. Israel and the foe are as it were two warriors matched in single combat. Cp. Micah vii. 8.

14. The words, taken from the Song of Moses (Ex. xv. 2; cp. Is. xii. 2) recall the memory of Israel's greatest deliverance, and imply that He Who brought them out of Egypt is still their Deliverer.

15—18. The rejoicings of the festival in gratitude to Jehovah for preserving the nation's life.

15. *tabernacles*] Tents, i.e. dwellings (xci. 10), unless the reference be to the tents of pilgrims to the feast pitched outside Jerusalem. The rendering 'tabernacles' might seem to connect the Psalm with the Feast

The right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.
The right hand of the LORD is exalted:
The right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.
I shall not die, but live,
And declare the works of the LORD.
The LORD hath chastened me sore:
But he hath not given me over unto death.
Open to me the gates of righteousness:
I will go into them, *and* I will praise the LORD:
This gate of the LORD,
Into which the righteous shall enter.
I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me,
And art become my salvation.

of Tabernacles, but the word for the 'booths' used on that occasion is a different one. *The righteous* are Israel, regarded in the light of their calling, and contrasted with 'the wicked,' the heathen who sought to frustrate God's purpose by destroying them. Cp. xxxiii. 5; Hab. i. 13. *Vv.* 15 *b*, 16 are the joyous shout of the righteous, and are based on Ex. xv. 6, 12.

17, 18. Israel is the speaker. In its renewed national life it recognises the gift of Jehovah which is to be employed in praising Him (Is. xliii. 21). Its sufferings have been for chastening; God cannot permit His people to perish (Jer. xxx. 11=xlvi. 28; Hab. i. 12). The LORD =Jah in these verses.

19—24. The procession has reached the Temple gates, and seeks to enter (19). A voice from within reminds them of the condition of entry (20); and passing into the Temple courts the grateful people renew their praises for the miracle of deliverance which has been wrought for them (21—24).

19. The language is robbed of its proper force if it is regarded merely as a general expression of a desire to worship in the Temple, and not rather as a call to the priests within to open the gates for the approaching procession. Cp. xxiv. 7 ff. The gates of the Temple are called "gates of righteousness" because it is the abode of the righteous God (cp. Jer. xxxi. 23), from whence (cp. Ps. xx. 2) He manifests His righteousness in the salvation of His people. See note on lxv. 5.

I will go &c.] I will enter into them, I will give thanks to Jah.

20. This is the gate that belongs to Jehovah;
The righteous may enter into it.

The emphasis is on *righteous*. Those who would enter must be righteous like Him Who dwells there. Cp. xv. 1 ff.; xxiv. 3 ff.; Is. xxvi. 2.

21. I will give thanks unto thee, for thou hast answered me (R.V.).

and art become my salvation] Another allusion to Ex. xv. 2.

22 The stone *which* the builders refused
Is become the head *stone* of the corner.
23 This is the LORD's doing;
It is marvellous in our eyes.
24 This *is* the day *which* the LORD hath made;
We will rejoice and be glad in it.
25 Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD:

22. The stone which the builders rejected
Is become the head of the corner.

A metaphor from building. The 'corner-stone' bonding the walls together was a most important part of the structure. A large and strong stone was needed for the purpose. It is mentioned along with the foundation (Jer. li. 26; Job xxxviii. 6) of which it formed part (Is. xxviii. 16); and so possibly the meaning here is 'the chief corner-stone' of the foundation. But 'the head of the corner' is more naturally explained to be the top-stone (Zech. iv. 7), not only bonding the walls together, but completing the building. Israel is the 'head corner-stone.' The powers of the world hung it aside as useless, but God destined it for the most honourable and important place in the building of His kingdom in the world. The words express Israel's consciousness of its mission and destiny in the purpose of God. The perfect "is become" is a perfect of certainty. With the eye of faith the Psalmist sees the Divine purpose already realised.

Our Lord applies the passage to Himself in His solemn warning to the Pharisees of the consequences in rejecting Him (Matt. xxi. 42; Mk. xii. 10, 11; Lk. xx. 17). St Peter also quotes it (Act. iv. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 7). Comp. also Eph. ii. 20. The principle underlying this use of the words originally spoken of Israel is that Christ was the true representative of Israel, Who undertook and fulfilled the mission in which Israel had failed.

23. *This &c.*] Lit. *From Jehovah has this come to pass.* The order of the words emphasises *From Jehovah.* Cp. Neh. vi. 16, "They perceived that it was from our God that this work was wrought."

marvellous] Nothing less than a miracle, visibly attesting the providential care of Jehovah for His people. See note on lxxi. 17. The same word is used in Jer. xxxii. 17, 27 with reference to the promised restoration of Israel from captivity. "There is nothing too hard (lit. *wonderful*) for thee."

24. *To Jehovah alone we owe this day of national rejoicing.* Cp. Is. xxv. 9. "There was exceeding great gladness" is the description of the festival in Neh. viii. 17.

in it] Or, in Him. Cp. xxxii. 11.

25—29. Vows and prayers, blessings and praises.

25. We beseech thee, Jehovah, save, we beseech thee!
We beseech thee, Jehovah, prosper (us), we beseech thee!

A prayer that Jehovah will continue and carry forward the work

O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.
Blessed *be* he that cometh in the name of the LORD:
We have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.
God *is* the LORD, which hath shewed us light:
Bind the sacrifice with cords,
Even unto the horns of the altar.

which He has begun. Cp. Jer. xxxi. 7. For the form of entreaty cp. xxvi. 4, 16. Now of A.V. is a particle of supplication, not of time.

send now prosperity] The very words of Nehemiah's prayer (i. 11) "O Lord, I beseech thee...prosper now thy servant."

26. The priests in the Temple bless the entering procession. **Blessed in the name of Jehovah be he that cometh!** The accentuation rightly connects *in the name of Jehovah* with *blessed*. Cp. cxxix. 8; Deut. xxi. 5; 2 Sam. vi. 18.

With these words and with the *Hosanna*[1] ('save now') of the preceding verse, the multitudes greeted Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem (Matt. xxi. 9). The Psalm may already have received a Messianic interpretation. *Hosanna* was a "God save the king" (xx. 9); and "he that cometh" was a title of the Messiah (Matt. xi. 3). The disciples, expanding the original, shouted: "Blessed is *the king* that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Luke xix. 38; cp. Mk. xi. 10).

27. **Jehovah is God, and hath given us light!** He has proved Himself to be *El*, the God of might, as of old at the Exodus (Ex. xv. 2): He has once more banished the darkness of the night of calamity and shewn us the light of His favour. There may be an allusion to the pillar of fire (Ex. xiii. 21; cp. Neh. ix. 12, 19); and to the priestly blessing (Num. vi. 25).

bind &c.] Evidently an exhortation to some act of thanksgiving for God's mercy. But the meaning is uncertain. It is doubtful whether *chag*, properly *a pilgrimage festival*, can mean *a festival sacrifice*: the horns were the most sacred part of the altar, on which the blood of the sin-offering was sprinkled (Lev. iv. 7; 1 Kings i. 50), and it seems improbable that the victims would ever have been bound to them: the preposition *'ad*, 'up to,' can hardly be used with the verb *bind* in the simple sense of 'to.' Various explanations have been proposed. (1) 'Bind the victim with cords (and lead it) up to the horns of the altar,' or, 'till it is sacrificed and its blood sprinkled on the horns of the altar': or, 'so as to fill all the space right up to the altar,' with reference to the number of beasts to be sacrificed. But these explanations, beside giving a doubtful meaning to *chag*, require much to be read into the sentence. (2) The LXX (συστήσασθε ὁρτὴν ἐν τοῖς πυκάζουσιν), Symm. (συνδήσατε ἐν πανηγύρει πυκάσματα) and Jerome (frequentate sollemnitatem in fronduosis) explain the word rendered 'cords' above to mean

[1] *Hosanna* (ὡσαννά) represents a contracted form הוֹשַׁע־נָא (cp. lxxxvi. 2), *hōshā' nnā*, which was substituted for the fuller form הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא, *hōshī'āh nnā* used in the Psalm. See Dalman, *Gramm. des Jüd. Pal. Aram.* p. 198.

28 Thou *art* my God, and I will praise thee:
Thou art my God, I will exalt thee.
29 O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

thick boughs' (cp. Ezek. xix. 11, and the use of the cognate adj. in Lev. xxiii. 40. 'boughs of thick trees') with reference either to the boughs of which the booths were made, or to the bundles of branches, known in later times as *Lulab*, which the worshippers at the Feast of Tabernacles carried. Hence Cheyne, 'Lead the procession with branches, (step on) to the altar-horns': Baethgen, 'Link the dance with boughs, up to the altar-horns.' It is supposed that one of the ceremonies of the festival was a procession or sacred dance round the altar, in which the worshippers carried the *Lulab*, and waved them so as to touch the horns of the altar. These interpretations are equally questionable, and it is possible that the text is corrupt.

28. *I will praise thee*] Rather, I will give thanks unto thee, as in *v.* 29. The verse is another echo of Ex. xv. 2.

thou art *my God*] So the LXX. The Heb. text has, O my God. The word for 'God' in the preceding line is *El*, here it is *Elohim*. At the end of the verse the LXX repeats *v.* 21.

29. The Psalm concludes with the chorus of praise with which it began.

PSALM CXIX.

This great "Psalm of the Law" is based upon the prophetic (Ezra ix. 11) presentation of the Law in the Book of Deuteronomy, with the spirit and language of which its author's mind was saturated. It represents the religious ideas of Deuteronomy developed in the communion of a devout soul with God. It is the fruit of that diligent study of the Law which is enjoined in Deut. vi. 1—9, a beginning of the fulfilment of the promise of an inward and spiritual knowledge of it which is proclaimed by Jeremiah (xxxi. 33 ff.). The Psalmist is one whose earnest desire and stedfast purpose it is to make God's law the governing principle of his conduct, to surrender all self-willed thoughts and aims, to subordinate his whole life to the supremely perfect Will of God, with unquestioning faith in His all-embracing Providence and unfailing love.

The 'Law of God,' which the Psalmist describes in its manifold aspects as His law, word, promise, commandments, statutes, judgements, precepts, testimonies, ways, is not the law in the narrower sense of the Mosaic legislation or the Pentateuch. The Hebrew word *tōrāh* has a wider range of meaning, and here, as in Pss. i and xix, it must be understood to mean all Divine revelation as the guide of life. This it is which kindles the Psalmist's enthusiasm and demands his allegiance. It is no rigid code of commands and prohibitions, but a body of teaching, the full meaning of which can only be realised gradually and by the help of Divine instruction. It has been said that the Psalmist's

devotion to the Law contains the germ of Pharisaic legalism, but it may be questioned whether the observation is just. Nowhere does the Psalmist allow law to interpose between him and God; never is a formal observance of external rules substituted for the inward devotion of the heart. If sometimes his professions of obedience seem to savour of self-righteousness, his prayers for grace fully recognise that strength to obey must come from God. The Psalm is an acknowledgement of the blessing of a revelation, of the strength which the law gives to Israel in the midst of surrounding heathenism, and to the faithful Israelite in the presence of a prevailing laxity of faith and morals. In an age when the voice of prophecy was rarely heard, or perhaps was altogether silent, it begins to draw strength from meditation on the revelation made to past generations. It points no doubt towards the age of the Scribes, but it represents the best spirit of that age[1]. It is remarkable that a Psalm, emanating from the period in which the ritual law was codified and the Temple became the centre of Israel's religion, should contain no reference whatever to ceremonial or sacrifice. Doubtless the Psalmist would have included the ceremonial law as a part of God's commandments, but evidently he does not regard it as the principal part of them. The whole Psalm is animated by a profound inwardness and spirituality, as far removed as possible from the superstitious literalism of a later age. It shews no tendency to substitute mechanical observance of rules for the living application of principles. Such obedience, if it falls short of the full liberty of the Gospel, is at least a step towards it.

The close personal relation of the Psalmist to God is one of the most striking features of the Psalms in general, and in few Psalms is it more marked than in this. In every verse but one (115) or at most two (but on 128 see note) after the first three introductory verses God is addressed; in all but some fourteen verses the Psalmist addresses God in the first person, or, which is the same thing, as His servant.

The Psalmist has arranged his meditations in an elaborate alphabetical form, adopted partly perhaps as an aid to memory. The Psalm consists of 22 stanzas, according to the number of the letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Each of the 8 verses in a stanza begins with the same letter, and the letters are taken in their regular order. The arrangement of Lamentations iii presents the nearest parallel, but there the stanzas consist of three verses only. (For other alphabetical Psalms see *Introd.* p. lxiv.) This artificiality of structure seems to have hindered many commentators from appreciating the variety of the contents of the Psalm, and many have denied that any real connexion or progress of thought is to be found in it. In a sense this may be true: the verses are not so much linked together by logical connexion as united by their direction to a common centre, but each stanza has, as a rule, some leading thought, which gives it a distinctive character. Those who by long devotional use have become intimately familiar with the Psalm have found a significant variety in the apparent monotony of its language. For them it is 'the Psalm of the Saints'; 'the Alphabet of Divine Love'; 'the Christian's golden ABC of the praise, love, power

[1] Cp. Oehler's *O.T. Theology*, §§ 84, 201.

and use of the Psalm. [illegible] the [illegible] of [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

beginning at any rate of the conditions described above is to be found in the evils which Ezra and Nehemiah endeavoured to remedy, and against which Malachi protested. (See e.g. Neh. v. 11, xiii; Mal. iii. 13—15.) There are not a few points of contact in thought and language between their writings and the Psalm. It may have been written about the middle of the fifth century B.C., possibly not till considerably later, but certainly not so late as the Maccabaean age. There are no traces of the struggles of the time when the possession of a copy of the law and the observance of the characteristic rites of Judaism were punishable with death.

Delitzsch infers from ver. 9 ff., 99, 100, 141, that the Psalmist was a young man; Ewald from ver. 84—87 that he was advanced in years. Neither inference seems to be justified. More probably he was a man of mature years, who had learned much by experience, but felt that he had still much more to learn.

Hitzig conjectures that he was a prisoner who beguiled the tedium of his imprisonment by the composition of the Psalm, and Delitzsch is inclined to adopt the suggestion. But there is no sufficient ground for such a hypothesis.

It is not likely that the Psalm was deliberately composed "as a *vade mecum* for Israelite young men." Doubtless it was well adapted for a compendium of instruction, but it attests itself to be the utterance of heartfelt devotion. Nor again is it a 'national' Psalm, in the sense that the Psalmist merges his own personality in that of the community and speaks in its name. Doubtless he speaks for others as well as himself; it is of the essence of inspired poetry to be representative and to possess a catholicity of thought; and often he appropriates the national experience, for to the Israelite membership in the covenant nation was a profound reality; but the Psalm breathes throughout the spirit of the most intense personal conviction, of the most intimate but deeply reverent communion with God.

It will be most convenient to consider once for all the various words for 'the Law' which recur so frequently in this Psalm[1], and to note some of its most characteristic phrases.

1. *Tôrâh*, 'law,' LXX νόμος, occurs 25 times. Cp. Deut. iv. 8 &c. It has however a much wider range of meaning than 'law.' It denotes (a) *direction* or *instruction*, whether human (Prov. i. 8) or Divine: (b) *a body of teaching*: (c) more definitely, *a law*, or (d) *a code of laws*, whether the Deuteronomic code or the Levitical legislation, 'the law of Moses': and so finally (e) the Pentateuch. Here, as in Pss. i and xix, it must be taken in its widest sense, as synonymous with the 'word' of Jehovah (Is. i. 10; ii. 3), to include all Divine revelation as the guide of life, prophetic exhortation as well as priestly direction, the sum of an Israelite's duty. (Cp. the use of 'the law' to denote the whole O.T. in John x. 34.)

[1] According to the Massoretic note on v. 122 one of the *ten expressions*, pointing to the 'ten words' of the Decalogue,—'saying,' 'word,' 'testimony,' 'way,' 'judgement,' 'precept,' 'commandment,' 'law,' 'statute,' 'faithfulness' (according to another reading 'righteousness') occurs in every verse except v. 122 (to which v. 132 should be added). 'Faithfulness' however is an attribute of the law, not a synonym for it: and the word 'judgements' does not always mean 'ordinances.'

2. *Dābār*, 'word,' LXX λόγος (20 times), in plur. 'words' (3 times), is the most general term for God's communication of His Will to men, especially through prophets. It will be remembered that the "Ten Commandments" are literally the "Ten Words" (Deut. iv. 13). Cp. Deut. iv. 2, 10; &c.

3. *'Imrāh*, 'saying,' or collectively 'sayings,' LXX λόγιον (19 times), is a poetical synonym for *dābār*, rare in prose, but found in Is. v. 24 in parallelism with *tōrāh*. Cp. Deut. xxxiii. 9.

4. *Mitsvāh*, 'commandment,' LXX ἐντολή (21 times in plural, once in singular collectively), denotes a definite command imposed by authority. It is often coupled with the two following words in Deut. (e.g. vi. 1).

5. *Chuqqīm*, 21 times, once *chuqqōth*, 'statutes,' LXX δικαιώματα. lit. something engraved or inscribed, so what is prescribed or enacted. Frequently in Deut. (iv. 1 &c.).

6. *Mishpāṭīm*, 'judgements,' or 'ordinances,' LXX κρίματα (19 times in plur., 4 times in sing.), has some variety of meaning. The idea in the word is "that of a *judicial decision*, made authoritatively once, and constituting a rule, a precedent, applicable to other similar cases in the future" (Driver on Deut. iv. 1); but in several passages of the Psalm it means the *judicial acts* of Jehovah, executing judgement on the wicked, and revealing or vindicating His law. Common in Deut. (iv. 1 &c.).

7. *Piqquḍīm*, δικαιώματα (21 times), 'precepts,' 'injunctions,' LXX ἐντολαί, a poetical word found only in the Psalter (xix. 8; cxii. 18; cxl. 7).

8. *'Edāh* or *'ēdūth* (sing. once, plur. 22 times), 'testimony,' LXX μαρτύρια. The idea of the word is "that of an *attestation*, or formal affirmation; hence, as referred to God, a solemn declaration of His Will on points (especially) of moral or religious duty, or a protest against human propensity to deviate from it...." The word came to be used "as a general designation of moral and religious ordinances, conceived as a Divinely instituted standard of conduct." The term 'testimony' in the singular is applied to the Decalogue "as a concise and forcible statement of God's will and human duty" (Driver on Deut. iv. 45). Cf. Deut. iv. 45; vi. 17, 20: in the sing. *ēdūth* is frequent in Ex., Lev., Num.

9. *Derek*, 'way,' LXX ὁδός, denotes the course of conduct marked out by God's law. Cp. Deut. v. 33; ix. 12, &c.

10. *'Orach*, 'path,' a poetical synonym for *derek*; not in Deut., but common in Prov.

The *attributes* applied to the Law should also be studied. Like its Author (*v.* 137, cp. Deut. xxxii. 4) it is perfectly righteous. The note of righteousness is constantly repeated; in all its aspects the Law answers to that perfect standard which God is to Himself for all His works and words. Its faithfulness and truth correspond to the faithfulness and truth of His nature; it is sharply contrasted with all that is false in belief and conduct.

Other constantly recurring expressions should also be noted. The Psalmist's repeated protestations that he has 'observed' or 'kept' the law, his resolutions to do so, and his prayers for strength to fulfil them,

answer to the repeated injunctions of Deut. (iv. 2 &c.). 'With a (my) whole heart,' with entire devotion of thought and will, is a phrase characteristic alike of this Psalm and of the Book of Deut.[1] (iv. 29; vi. 5 &c.) where it is often coupled with 'the whole soul,' the organ of feeling and emotion. In Deut. the Israelites are repeatedly exhorted to *learn* the statutes and judgements (v. 1) and to teach them to their children (iv. 10; and repeatedly the Psalmist prays that he may be taught. The Psalmist's reiterated prayers for 'understanding' recall the language of Deut. iv. 6. 'Life' is held out in Deut. (iv. 1 &c.) as the reward of obedience; and for 'life' the Psalmist continually pleads—'quicken thou me'—'let me live' (25, 37, 40. 88, 107, 149, 154, 156, 159, 116, 144). The source of 'life' he finds in the law and promises of God (50, 93): and by 'life' he means not simply preservation from death, but liberation from all, whether within or without, that crushes and paralyses life, and hinders its proper use and enjoyment; for 'life' includes the ideas of light and joy and prosperity. It finds its fullest realisation in communion with God. The original promise of life to the nation is coupled with the promise of the possession of the land, but the latter now drops out of sight, and the conception of 'life' is approximating towards the higher meaning of the word in the N.T. Cp. Deut. viii. 3. Very noteworthy is the Psalmist's enthusiastic *love* for the Law. The love which the Israelite was bidden to cherish for Jehovah (Deut. vi. 5 &c.) is kindled by the manifold revelation of His Will in the Law. "O how I love thy law: it is my meditation all the day" (97). It is no irksome restraint of his liberty, but his delight, his joy, his treasure, his comfort, the subject of his meditations by day and by night, the source of trust and hope amid all the perplexities and troubles of life. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

ALEPH.

(א) Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way, 119
Who walk in the law of the LORD.
(א) Blessed *are* they that keep his testimonies, 2

1—8. *Aleph.* Loyal obedience to Jehovah's law is the source of man's truest happiness, and therefore the Psalmist prays that it may be the fixed rule of his life, and that he may learn to understand it better.

1. *Blessed* &c.] **Happy the perfect (or upright) in way**, *integri vitae*, those whose course of life is directed and governed by single-hearted devotion to Jehovah, and integrity in dealing with their fellow men. **Cp. i. 1; xv. 2 note; ci. 2, 6.**

who walk &c.] Integrity of life is defined as a walking in Jehovah's law. This is the path (*v.* 33) which man must follow if he would avoid sin. Cp. Ex. xvi. 4; Luke i. 6. For the meaning of 'law' see above, p. 703.

2. *testimonies*] See above, p. 704.

[1] Deut. prefers the form *lēbāb*, the Psalm, except in *v.* 7, uses *lēb*.

And that seek him with the whole heart.
3 (ℵ) They also do no iniquity:
They walk in his ways.
4 (ℵ) Thou hast commanded *us*
To keep thy precepts diligently.
5 (ℵ) O that my ways were directed
To keep thy statutes!
6 (ℵ) Then shall I not be ashamed,
When I have respect unto all thy commandments.
7 (ℵ) I will praise thee with uprightness of heart,
When I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.
8 (ℵ) I will keep thy statutes:
O forsake me not utterly.

and that *seek him* &c.] Omit *and*. Cp. *v.* 10; Deut. iv. 29. The word includes not only approaching God in prayer and worship, but studying to understand His Will expressed in His law.

with the whole heart] See above, p. 705.

3. This verse is to be connected with the preceding one:

Yea, have wrought no unrighteousness,
Have walked in his ways.

4. **Thou hast commanded thy precepts,**
That (men) should observe them diligently.

This verse calls attention to the Author of the law (THOU is emphatic), and to the purpose of its enactment. Cp. Deut. iv. 2. On 'precepts' see above, p. 704.

5. **Oh that my ways were established**
To observe thy statutes! (R.V.)

The thought of God's Will expressed in *v.* 4 naturally evokes a prayer that in his whole life and conduct he may fulfil God's Will, not fitfully and uncertainly, but constantly and consistently. For *established* cp. Prov. iv. 26.

6. *Then* points back to *v.* 5, and is further explained in 6 *b*: *then*... namely, *when I* &c. No real disgrace or disappointment can befall him whose single aim is the observance of God's law in all its parts.

7. **I will give thanks unto thee...when I learn** &c. (R.V.)] The Psalmist knows that he has not yet attained to a complete knowledge of God's revealed Will; but he gives thanks for every advance. The will to obey (*vv.* 5, 6) is the condition of progress (cp. John vii. 17); and throughout the Psalm he prays repeatedly for teaching and direction.

8. *I will keep*] R.V. **I will observe**, as in *vv.* 4, 5.

thy statutes] *Ceremonies* in P.B.V. is a curiously misleading rendering, taken from Münster's *caerimonias tuas*. Coverdale's version of 1535 has *statutes*.

O forsake me not utterly] As Israel in the Exile had been for a time forsaken by Jehovah as the punishment of its sin (Is. xlix. 14; liv. 7; cp. Deut. xxxi. 17).

BETH.

(ב) Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? 9
By taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.
(ב) With my whole heart have I sought thee: 10
O let me not wander from thy commandments.
(ב) Thy word have I hid in mine heart, 11
That I might not sin against thee.
(ב) Blessed *art* thou, O LORD: 12
Teach me thy statutes.
(ב) With my lips have I declared 13
All the judgments of thy mouth.
(ב) I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, 14
As *much as* in all riches.
(ב) I will meditate in thy precepts, 15
And have respect unto thy ways.

9—16. *Beth.* Love for God's law the safeguard and the joy of life.

9. *a young man*] Who most needs help to keep himself pure from sin (xxv. 7). Cp. xxxiv. 11 ff.; and the constant address of the teacher to his disciple in the Book of Proverbs, 'My son.'

by taking heed &c.] The answer to the question of the previous line. The object of the verb is not expressed, and the exact meaning is doubtful. It may be 'by taking heed *to himself* according to the rule of Thy word'; cp. P.B.V., 'even by ruling himself after thy word': or more probably, 'by observing *thy statutes* (*vv.* 4, 6) according to thy commandment.' The LXX and Jerome seem to represent a different reading, 'by observing thy words.'

10. Cp. *v.* 2*b*.

O let me not wander &c.] Let me not err through ignorance or inadvertence (v. 67; xix. 12). My intention is good, but my knowledge is imperfect and my strength is small. "The self-mistrust of the second clause is a proof of the reality of the first" (Aglen).

11. *have I hid*] Better as R.V. have I laid up, stored up and treasured in my heart as a safeguard against sin. Cp. Job xxiii. 12; Prov. ii. 1; vii. 1; Jer. xxxi. 33.

12. The confession of Jehovah's adorableness is a fitting preface to the prayer for further instruction. Cp. *v.* 7.

13. *have I declared*] Or, recounted. The faithful Israelite was not merely to treasure in his mind God's declarations of His Will, but to "talk of them" (Deut. vi. 7), to produce his treasure for the good of others (Matt. xii. 35).

14. Obedience to the laws by which God attests His Will is the true wealth which brings joy to life. Cp. the teaching of Proverbs ii. 4; iii. 13 ff.; viii. 10, 11, 18, 19; xvi. 16.

15. *thy ways*] Or, paths (Jer. *semitae*), a different word from that

16 (ב) I will delight myself in thy statutes:
I will not forget thy word.

GIMEL.

17 (ג) Deal bountifully with thy servant, *that* I may live,
And keep thy word.
18 (ג) Open thou mine eyes,
That I may behold wondrous *things* out of thy law.
19 (ג) I *am* a stranger in the earth:
Hide not thy commandments from me.
20 (ג) My soul breaketh for the longing
That it hath unto thy judgments at all times.
21 (ג) Thou hast rebuked the proud *that are* cursed,
Which do err from thy commandments.

in *vv.* 1, 3, 5. It is for the most part a poetical word, and is used in *vv.* 9, 101, 104, 128.

16. Cp. *vv.* 47, 70.

17—24. *Gimel.* The knowledge and observance of God's law the aim of life, a strength and comfort in time of contempt and persecution.

17. *Deal bountifully*] Cp. xiii. 6; cxvi. 7; cxlii. 7.

and keep thy word] Better as R.V. **so will I observe thy word.** "The Psalmist desires continued life mainly because it affords the opportunity of continued obedience" (Maclaren). Cp. cxviii. 17.

18. *Open*] Lit. *uncover.* Natural sight is unable to discern the mysteries (cp. *v.* 27) of Divine revelation; hence this prayer for the removal of the veil from his eyes. Cp. 2 Kings vi. 17 (a different word); Eph. i. 17, 18.

19. *a stranger*] A sojourner (*ger*), or alien residing under protection in a country not his own, needs to be instructed in the law of the land that he may not offend against it. Such a 'sojourner' is the Psalmist upon earth, and therefore he prays God, the Lord of the earth, to impart to him a full knowledge of his obligations. The further thought may be implied that as his residence is only temporary, he would fain make the best use of life which may be short. Cp. xxxix. 12, note.

20. A plea for an answer to the prayer of *v.* 19. His soul *breaks*, lit. *is crushed*, overwhelmed and consumed with longing for the fuller knowledge of God's judgements, i.e. the authoritative declaration of His Will. See above, p. 704.

21. The A.V. follows the Massoretic text; but the more obvious construction of the verse is that of the LXX, Syr., and Jer., followed by P.B.V. and R.V. marg. **Thou rebukest the proud: cursed are they which do wander** &c. God's *rebuke* is that sentence of condemnation which carries its own execution with it (ix. 5). The perfect tense (*hast rebuked*) states a general truth and is best translated by the

(ג) Remove from me reproach and contempt; 22
For I have kept thy testimonies.
(ג) Princes also did sit *and* speak against me: 23
But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.
(ג) Thy testimonies also *are* my delight 24
And my counsellors.

DALETH.

(ד) My soul cleaveth unto the dust: 25
Quicken thou me according to thy word.
(ד) I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: 26

present, *thou rebukest*. *The proud* (*vv.* 51, 69, 78, 85, 122; cf. Mal. iii. 15; iv. 1) are those who sin wilfully and presumptuously (xix. 13; Deut. xvii. 12, 13), careless or apostate Israelites. See above, p. 702.

22. *Remove*] R.V. take away. lit. *strip off*. shame being regarded as a covering; but probably *gōl*, 'roll away,' should be read instead of *gal*, shame being regarded as a burden. This verse is to be connected with *v.* 21. 'Thou rebukest the proud; rebuke them now, and relieve me of the contempt which they heap upon me for my observance of Thy law.'

23. A further proof of his fidelity. Though those in authority sit in council and devise plans for his ruin, he continues to meditate on Jehovah's statutes. Cp. Dan. vi. 4 ff. It has been maintained that foreign princes must be meant, and consequently that the Psalmist must be speaking in the name of the nation, and not as an individual. But *princes* was the title commonly given to the Israelite nobles in post exilic times, and the Psalmist was evidently persecuted by wealthy and powerful countrymen. Cp. *v.* 161, and see above, p. 702.

24. When he is scorned by men, he can still find delight in God's law; though his enemies take counsel against him, he has counsellors to direct him in God's statutes. The LXX seems to have read, *and thy judgements are my counsellors*, a reading which improves the structure of the verse.

25—32. *Daleth*. In the midst of humiliation and trial the Psalmist protests the sincerity of his purpose, and prays for deepened knowledge to keep him true and steadfast.

25. The Psalmist is in deep distress. He lies prostrate, crushed and unable to rise (xliv. 25; vii. 5; xxii. 15); but he can pray that God will revive him, and give him fresh strength and joy in life according to His promise. On the prayer *quicken* or *revive me* see above, p. 705. Cp. lxxi. 20; lxxx. 18; lxxxv. 6; cxxxviii. 7; cxliii. 11.

according to thy word] For life is repeatedly promised as the reward of obedience to the law of God. See Deut. viii. 3; xxx. 6, 15, 19, 20; xxxii. 47.

26. *I have* recounted *my ways*, laid before Thee in detail all the concerns of my life, and thou hast answered me. Answered prayer is

Teach me thy statutes.

27 (ד) Make me to understand the way of thy precepts:
So shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

28 (ד) My soul melteth for heaviness:
Strengthen thou me according unto thy word.

29 (ד) Remove from me the way of lying:
And grant me thy law graciously.

30 (ד) I have chosen the way of truth:
Thy judgments have I laid *before me.*

31 (ד) I have stuck unto thy testimonies:
O LORD, put me not to shame.

32 (ד) I will run the way of thy commandments,
When thou shalt enlarge my heart.

HE.

33 (ה) Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes;

a proof of God's good will, and therefore he prays for yet further instruction, *teach me thy statutes.*

27. The prayer of 26 *b* is further developed. This prayer for deeper insight recurs in *vv.* 34, 73, 125, 144, 169.

so shall I talk of thy wondrous works] Rather, that I may meditate (as in *vv.* 15, 23) on thy wonders, the mysteries of God's Will revealed in His law (*v.* 18).

28. When my soul dissolves in tears (Job xvi. 20) for grief, strengthen me according to Thy promise.

29, 30. The way of falsehood (cp. 104, 128), all conduct that is not governed by God's truth, is contrasted with the way of faithfulness, of loyalty to Him. Though he has made the great choice, and set before himself (xvi. 8) the declarations of God's Will as the rule of his life, he prays that God will keep him from disloyalty, and that for this end He will graciously impart to him fresh instruction in His law.

31. The protestation of a good conscience is continued. I cleave *unto thy testimonies* (cp. Deut. x. 20; xi. 22; xiii. 4; xxx. 20); *put me not to shame*: let me not be disappointed of the blessings promised to faithful obedience.

32. When his heart is set free from the cramping constraint of trouble and anxiety, the Psalmist will use his liberty for more energetic service. Cp. xxv. 17 note; Is. lx. 5. Another explanation makes the second clause the reason for the first, *I will run... for thou dost enlarge* &c.: I will serve Thee with alacrity, for when I do so, Thou dost expand my heart with a sense of joy and freedom.

33—40. *Hē.* A series of prayers for instruction guidance and strength.

33. *Teach me*] Or, *instruct me in...*: the verb from which *tōrāh*, 'instruction,' 'law,' is derived. Cp. xxvii. 11; lxxxvi. 11.

And I shall keep it *unto* the end.
(ה) Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; 34
Yea, I shall observe it with *my* whole heart.
(ה) Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; 35
For therein do I delight.
(ה) Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, 36
And not to covetousness.
(ה) Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; 37
And quicken thou me in thy way.
(ה) Stablish thy word unto thy servant, 38
Who *is devoted* to thy fear.
(ה) Turn away my reproach which I fear: 39
For thy judgments *are* good.
(ה) Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: 40
Quicken me in thy righteousness.

and I shall keep it] Or, *that I may keep it*; and similarly in *v.* 34, *that I may keep thy law, yea observe it* &c.

unto *the end*] The word *'eqeb* is generally rendered thus, here and in *v.* 112, but it nowhere else has this sense. In Ps. xix. 11; Prov. xxii. 4, it means *reward*: and so Baethgen would explain it here; *I will keep it as reward*. "In xix. 11 a reward is expected for keeping the law: in Ps. cxix the life which is pleasing to God is itself regarded as reward."

36. *covetousness*] Or, *unjust gain*. With this and the following verse cp. Is. xxxiii. 15.

37. *vanity* includes all that is false, unreal, worthless. Cp. 1 John ii. 15—17.

in thy way] So the LXX. The Heb. text as pointed reads *in thy ways*. He prays to God the author of life for vigour to resist temptation and walk in His ways.

"'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
Oh life, not death, for which we pant,
More life, and fuller, that I want."

38. *who* is devoted *to thy fear*] This rendering is retained in R.V. marg., but the order of the words is in favour of rendering

Confirm unto thy servant thy promise
Which belongeth to the fear of thee,

or, **Which maketh for the fear of thee.** Perform for me the promises made to those who fear Thee: or, which aim at promoting and encouraging reverence for Thee. Cp. cxxx. 4.

39. *my reproach*] Here, as in *vv.* 22, 23, 42, the scorn which he has to bear for his loyalty to God's law.

for thy judgments are *good*] And therefore I ought not to suffer for observing them. For *judgments* see *vv.* 13, 20, 30.

40. His will is good; but he needs fresh strength, and for this he

VAU.

41 (ו) Let thy mercies come also *unto* me, O LORD,
Even thy salvation, according to thy word.
42 (ו) So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me:
For I trust in thy word.
43 (ו) And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth;
For I have hoped in thy judgments.
44 (ו) So shall I keep thy law continually
For ever and ever.
45 (ו) And I will walk at liberty:
For I seek thy precepts.
46 (ו) I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings,

prays on the ground of God's righteousness, that attribute in virtue of which He must needs be true to His covenant-promises. Cp. v. 8, note.

41—48. *Vāv.* Prayers for grace and courage to witness a good confession.

41. *thy mercies*] Or, **thy lovingkindnesses**, manifested in *deliverance*, according to Thy promise.

42. **So shall I have an answer for him that reproacheth me** (R.V.)] Personal experience of God's manifold lovingkindness manifested in his deliverance will enable him to return a conclusive answer to those who taunt him with the uselessness of serving God. P.B.V. follows some of the Ancient Versions in reading the plural, *my blasphemers*.

43. This verse is to be taken in connexion with *vv.* 41, 42. 'And so let me not be deprived of power to bear witness to the truth before my persecutors, as I should be if I had no practical experience of Thy goodness, for I have waited with hope for Thy judgements'; here as usually, not judicial acts, but principles of right, which he expects to see realised in life.

44. *So shall* **I observe** *thy law*] This is his desire and purpose, if God will grant him grace.

continually for ever and ever] Unceasingly to the end of his life. Or does he merge his own personality in that of the nation, and look forward to the service of the generations to come?

45. *And I will walk at liberty*] Lit. *in a broad place*, for God's commandment is "exceeding broad"; its observance is no restraint but the truest freedom. Or the meaning may be, *Let me walk at liberty*, free from the constraint of anxiety and persecution. Cp. *v.* 32; cxviii. 5.

I seek] **Or, I have studied**, given diligent heed to.

46. *before kings*] Like Daniel and his companions, or Nehemiah, or the martyrs of the Maccabaean period, he is ready, if need be, to

And will not be ashamed.
(ו) And I will delight myself in thy commandments, 47
Which I have loved.
(ו) My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, 48
which I have loved;
And I will meditate in thy statutes.

ZAIN.

(ז) Remember the word unto thy servant, 49
Upon which thou hast caused me to hope.
(ז) This *is* my comfort in my affliction: 50
For thy word hath quickened me.
(ז) The proud have had me greatly in derision: 51
Yet have I not declined from thy law.
(ז) I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; 52
And have comforted myself.

confess his faith boldly before the highest human authorities. Cp. Matt. x. 18; Acts xxvi. 1, 2.

47. Cp. *vv.* 16, 70.

which I love] Cp. *vv.* [48], 97, 113, 119, 127, 140, 159, 163; and see above, p. 705.

48. And I will lift up my hands unto thy commandments] The attitude of prayer, significant of an uplifted heart (xxviii. 2), and here of reverence and devotion.

which I have loved] The clause overweights the verse, and has probably been accidentally repeated from *v.* 47.

49—56. *Zayin.* In the midst of manifold trials God's law has brought hope, consolation, life, joy.

49. *upon which*] R.V. marg. *wherein*, a doubtful construction. Better as R.V. because. God's word of promise has given him hope, and he pleads that God will not forget it. As a faithful servant he ventures to claim a corresponding faithfulness from his Lord.

50. *This*] i.e. Thy word, if the rendering *for* is retained in the next line. But it is better to render, *This is my comfort*, that *thy word* &c. Past experience of the life-giving sustaining power of God's promise is his comfort in affliction.

51. *have had me greatly in derision*] Lit. *have scorned me exceedingly.* The 'proud' men of whom the Psalmist speaks belonged to the class of 'scorners,' the freethinkers who make what is good and holy the object of their ridicule. Cp. Prov. xxi. 24; and note on Ps. i. 1. Though they ridicule him, he does not swerve from his adherence to God's law.

52. *I* have *remembered thy judgments* which have been from ancient times (LXX ἀπ' αἰῶνος, cp. Lk. i. 70), either (as generally in the Psalm) the Divine ordinances or principles of right revealed from ancient times,

53 (ז) Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked
That forsake thy law.
54 (ז) Thy statutes have been my songs
In the house of my pilgrimage.
55 (ז) I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night,
And have kept thy law.
56 (ז) This I had,
Because I kept thy precepts.

CHETH.

57 (ח) *Thou art* my portion, O LORD:
I have said that *I* would keep thy words.
58 (ח) I intreated thy favour with *my* whole heart:
Be merciful unto me according to thy word.

which are true and sure in spite of all the scoffers' ridicule: or perhaps here, the judicial acts by which those ordinances have been maintained and vindicated in the course of history, and which will in due time descend upon the scoffers of the present.

53. *Horror* &c.] Hot indignation seizes me. It was not unmingled with sorrow, *v.* 136.

that forsake thy law] Careless or apostate Israelites are clearly meant.

54. God's statutes form the theme of his songs; they calm his mind and refresh his spirit in this transitory life of trial (Gen. xlvii. 9; 1 Chron. xxix. 15), as songs beguile the night (Job xxxv. 10), or cheer the traveller on his journey.

pilgrimage] Lit. *sojournings*. Cp. *v.* 19.

55. The constant recollection of the Lawgiver and all that He has revealed Himself to be, is the most powerful motive to observance of His laws.

in the night] Cp. *v.* 62; i. 2.

56. Either, *This I have had*, all this comfort and steadfastness and joy in the midst of the trials and sorrows of life have been mine, *because I have kept thy precepts*: or, *This I have had*, that *I have kept thy precepts*;—whatever advantages others may have had which I have not enjoyed, this supreme privilege has been mine, the keeping of Thy precepts. If this is the meaning, it strikes the keynote of the next stanza.

57—64. *Chēth*. The Psalmist's devotion to Jehovah and His law.

57. Thou art *my portion. O LORD*] So some MSS of the LXX (AT); but the Heb. text must be rendered, *Jehovah is my portion: I have purposed to observe thy words*: or, *Jehovah is my portion, have I said: that I may observe thy words*: or, more simply, with cod. ℵ of the LXX, and the Vulg., *Jehovah my portion, I have purposed* &c. Cp. xvi. 5; lxxiii. 26; cxlii. 5.

58. *be merciful*] Be gracious, as in iv. 1, and often. Cp. *vv.* 29, 132.

(ח) I thought on my ways, 59
And turned my feet unto thy testimonies.
(ח) I made haste, and delayed not 60
To keep thy commandments.
(ח) The bands of the wicked have robbed me. 61
But I have not forgotten thy law.
(ח) At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee 62
Because of thy righteous judgments.
(ח) I *am* a companion of all *them* that fear thee, 63
And of them that keep thy precepts.
(ח) The earth, O LORD, is full *of* thy mercy: 64
Teach me thy statutes.

TETH.

(ט) Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, 65
O LORD, according unto thy word.
(ט) Teach me good judgment and knowledge: 66
For I have believed thy commandments.
(ט) Before I was afflicted I went astray: 67
But now have I kept thy word.

59, 60. The diligent consideration of his conduct has ever led him back to order the course of his life in accordance with those laws which attest the Will of God and protest against man's wilfulness, and that without hesitation or procrastination.

61. The cords of the wicked have entangled me] A metaphor from the snare or noose of the hunter. Cp. *v.* 110; xviii. 5. Though the wicked lay snares for him, he will not cast in his lot with those who forget God. P.B.V. and A.V. follow some Jewish authorities, and Luther.

62. Far from forgetting the law, he will interrupt his sleep with thanksgivings for its righteous ordinances (*v.* 7).

64. Cp. xxxiii. 5; cxlv. 9. Jehovah's universal lovingkindness makes the Psalmist long to know more of His Will.

65—72. *Têth.* Jehovah's goodness toward His servant manifested in all His dealings, even in the discipline of affliction.

65. *according unto thy word*] i.e. thy promise. Cp. Deut. vi. 24; x. 13; xxx. 9, 15.

66. *good judgment*] Lit. *goodness of taste*, the power to distinguish promptly and surely between right and wrong.

for I have believed in *thy commandments*] Prayer for further instruction is grounded on past loyalty to the known Will of God.

67. *I went astray*] I did err; the word used in Lev. v. 18; Num. xv. 28. The verse is equally applicable to Israel as a nation, taught by the discipline of exile, or to the Psalmist as an individual. Cp. *vv.* 71, 75; Ps. cxviii. 18; Job v. 17.

68 (ט) Thou *art* good, and doest good;
Teach me thy statutes.
69 (ט) The proud have forged a lie against me:
But I will keep thy precepts with *my* whole heart.
70 (ט) Their heart is as fat as grease;
But I delight *in* thy law.
71 (ט) *It is* good for me that I have been afflicted;
That I might learn thy statutes.
72 (ט) The law of thy mouth *is* better unto me
Than thousands of gold and silver.

JOD.

73 (י) Thy hands have made me and fashioned me:
Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.
74 (י) They that fear thee will be glad when they see me,
Because I have hoped in thy word.
75 (י) I know, O LORD, that thy judgments *are* right,
And *that* thou *in* faithfulness hast afflicted me.

68. God is good in nature and in action, kind and beneficent. 'Bonus es tu, beneficus' (Jer.). Cp. Deut. vii. 16. To such a loving God he can appeal with confidence to teach him (Matt. vii. 11).

69. *The proud have forged a lie against me*] Lit. *have plastered falsehood over me*, "making his true character unrecognisable" (Del.), or perhaps, questioning the sincerity and disinterestedness of his service; but his answer to their calumny is a more resolute determination to obey: *as for me, with my whole heart will I keep thy precepts.*

70. Gross is their heart as fat (lit. the fat of the midriff), as insensible and incapable of receiving any spiritual impression as the fat near it (xvii. 10; lxxiii. 7; Is. vi. 10): as for me, in thy law do I delight.

71. Cp. *v.* 67.

72. This is the lesson he has learnt in the school of affliction—the inestimable preciousness of God's law. Cp. *v.* 14; Prov. viii. 10, 11.

73—80. *Yōd.* God has afflicted him in faithfulness: yet now O that He would comfort him, for the encouragement of the godly and the confusion of the proud.

73. *fashioned*] Or, *established.* Cp. Job x. 8; Deut. xxxii. 6.
give me understanding &c.] Complete Thy work: Thou hast made my bodily frame, perfect my spirit.

74. Let them that fear thee see me and be glad: let them rejoice when they see in me an example of the reward of trustful patience. Cp. lxix. 32.

75. *that thy judgments* are *right*] Righteous (R.V.), lit. *righteousness.* Cp. *vv.* 7, 62, &c.
hast afflicted me] Cp. Deut. viii. 2, 3, 16, where the same word

(ו) Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, 76
According to thy word unto thy servant.
(ז) Let thy tender mercies come *unto* me, that I may live: 77
For thy law *is* my delight.
(ח) Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely 78
with me without a cause:
But I will meditate in thy precepts.
(ט) Let those that fear thee turn unto me, 79
And those that have known thy testimonies.
(י) Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; 80
That I be not ashamed.

CAPH.

(כ) My soul fainteth for thy salvation: 81
But I hope in thy word.
(כ) Mine eyes fail for thy word, 82
Saying, When wilt thou comfort me?

is rendered *to humble*. All God's laws are in conformity with the perfect standard of His righteousness: faithfulness to His covenant leads him to use the discipline of chastisement to teach men obedience to those laws. Cp. Deut. xxxii. 4.

76, 77. Yet man needs to be comforted and revived lest he be overwhelmed by trouble (Heb. xii. 11). Cp. *vv.* 50, 82.

thy merciful kindness] **thy lovingkindness.**

thy word] of promise; e.g. Jer. xxxi. 13; Is. li. 3; lxvi. 13; Zech. i. 17.

77. *thy tender mercies*] **Thy compassions** (*v.* 156). Cp. Deut. xiii. 17, 18; Is. xlix. 13; Dv. 7; Zech. i. 16.

78. *for they dealt perversely with me without a cause*] Better, **for they have subverted me by falsehood.** Cp. Lam. iii. 36.

79. *and those that have known* &c.] **Even those who know.** So the *Q'rē*, with LXX, Syr., Jer. The *K'thībh* has **and they shall know**, or, **that they may know**, with the Targ. This gives the best sense. Let my experience of Thy mercy shew the godly the blessedness of keeping Thy testimonies.

80. *sound*] **Perfect**, cp. *v.* 1.

81—88. *Kaph.* Faith persevering in the midst of persecution when God defers His help, and seems to be leaving him to be the prey of his enemies.

81, 82. The soul grows faint, the eye dim, with the prolonged strain of watching for the fulfilment of God's promise to deliver His servant. Cp. *v.* 123; lxix. 3; lxxxiv. 2; Lam. iv. 17.

82. *saying*] R.V. **while I say.**

83 (כ) For I am become like a bottle in the smoke;
Yet do I not forget thy statutes.
84 (כ) How many *are* the days of thy servant?
When wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?
85 (כ) The proud have digged pits for me,
Which *are* not after thy law.
86 (כ) All thy commandments *are* faithful:
They persecute me wrongfully; help thou me.
87 (כ) They had almost consumed me upon earth;
But I forsook not thy precepts.
88 (כ) Quicken me after thy lovingkindness;
So shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

83. *For I am become like* a wineskin *in the smoke;* yet &c.] As a wineskin out of use hung up among the rafters of the roof grows shrivelled and blackened by the smoke till it almost loses its original appearance, so the Psalmist is growing emaciated and disfigured by suffering and sorrow till he can scarcely be recognised. Cp. cix. 24. Some commentators suppose that there is a reference to the custom of mellowing wine by putting it in the smoke (cp. "amphorae fumum bibere institutae," Horace, *Odes* III. 8. 11), and that the figure means that the Psalmist is being exposed to suffering to soften and mature his character, though the process is being continued so long that he is becoming unsightly and unrecognisable. At first sight this explanation is attractive, but the simile is clearly intended to describe bad not good effects of suffering. In spite of these, he does not forget God's commandments. The curious rendering of LXX, Symm., Syr., Jer., *like a wineskin in hoar frost*, has no claim to consideration.

84. *How many* &c.] Few at the most. The brevity of life is an argument for the speedy punishment of the Psalmist's persecutors, otherwise he may not live to see God's justice vindicated. Cp. lxxxix. 47; cii. 11 ff.

85. *pits*] A metaphor from the pitfalls used by hunters. Cp. lvii. 6; and especially Jer. xviii. 20, 22.

which] Rather, who. His enemies are presumptuous sinners, who despise and defy God's law (*vv.* 21, 53). Godless Israelites are clearly meant.

86. *faithful*] Lit. *faithfulness* (cp. *vv.* 75, 138); they are an expression of the character of God, in strong contrast to the falsehood (cp. *v.* 78) with which his persecutors assail him.

87. His persecutors had almost succeeded in making an end of him, yet he still held fast to the law. The second line brings the godlessness of their conduct into prominence.

upon earth] The scene of life: or, in the land: the Psalmist and such as he were almost exterminated. Cp. xii. 1.

88. If he is to continue glorifying God by the observance of His law,

LAMED.

(ל) For ever, O LORD, 89
Thy word *is* settled in heaven.

(ל) Thy faithfulness *is* unto all generations: 90
Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.

(ל) They continue *this* day according to thine ordinances: 91
For all *are* thy servants.

(ל) Unless thy law *had been* my delights, 92
I should then have perished in mine affliction.

God must preserve his life, and free it from the hindrances which impede its devotion to His service.

89—96. *Lamed.* The eternity, immutability, and comprehensiveness of God's law, which has been the Psalmist's support in affliction.

89. The A.V. rightly follows the LXX. Targ. and Jer. in treating the verse as one clause, the accentual division of the Hebr. being regarded as rhythmical not logical. Jehovah's word is eternal, immutable; it belongs to that sphere which is raised above the accidents of chance and change, and shares its attributes. Cp. lxxxix. 2.

is *settled*] **Standeth fast.**

90. The permanence of the earth which God has created is an emblem and guarantee of the permanence of His faithfulness. Cp. lxxviii. 69. Kay refers to a sermon by Chalmers on "The Constancy of God in His Works an argument for the Faithfulness of God in His Word."

91. This verse may be rendered,

According to thine ordinances [*judgements*] **they abide** [*stand*] **this day,**
For all things are thy servants.

The thought of the preceding verses is developed. Heaven and earth obey and subserve the ordinances of God. His Will is the universal law of Nature.

A slightly different rendering however agrees better with the second line: **For thy judgements they** (heaven and earth) **stand ready this day**; they are constantly prepared to perform Thy behests, for all things subserve Thy Will.

Either of these renderings is preferable to that of R.V. marg., *As for thy judgements, they abide this day.*

this *day*] i.e. *unto this day.*

"From the ministering of the Archangel to the labour of the insect, from the poising of the planets to the gravitation of a grain of dust, the power and glory of all creatures, and all matter, consist in their *obedience*, not in their freedom." Ruskin, *The Two Paths*, Lect. v., quoted by Kay.

92. *then*] emphatically, *in that case.* But for the refreshment of God's law, he would have utterly lost heart in affliction (Is. xl. 29—31).

93 (ל) I will never forget thy precepts:
For with them thou hast quickened me.

94 (ל) I *am* thine, save me;
For I have sought thy precepts.

95 (ל) The wicked have waited for me to destroy me:
But I will consider thy testimonies.

96 (ל) I have seen an end of all perfection:
But thy commandment *is* exceeding broad.

MEM.

97 (מ) O how love I thy law!
It *is* my meditation all the day.

98 (מ) Thou *through* thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies:
For they *are* ever with me.

99 (מ) I have more understanding than all my teachers:
For thy testimonies *are* my meditation.

This had revived him (*v.* 93), in this (*v.* 95) he had found consolation when his life was in peril.

94. *sought*] Or, studied. Cp. *v.* 45.

96. The meaning may be, 'I have learnt by experience that all earthly perfection has its limit: but God's commandment is unlimited in extent and value.' The word for 'perfection' (*tiklāh*) however occurs here only, and if its sense is to be determined by that of the most closely cognate word *taklīth*, it would seem to mean rather 'completeness,' the sum of things. The sum of earthly things is limited, Jehovah's law is infinite.

97—104. *Mem.* The sweetness and profitableness of the study of God's law. This stanza and that of *Shin* (*vv.* 161 ff.) contain no petition.

97. P.B.V. follows LXX and Vulg. in adding *Lord* to the first clause, where it seems to be wanted.

98. *Thou* through *thy commandments hast made me wiser* &c.] A scarcely possible rendering, though it has some support in the Ancient Versions. Better as R.V., Thy commandments make me wiser &c. For the sense cp. Deut. iv. 6.

for they are *ever with me*] Lit. For it is mine for ever. The use of the singular 'it,' as well as of the singular verb in the preceding line, implies the unity of God's law, though it includes many commandments. This law is his possession. Cp. *v.* 111.

99. *than all my teachers*] Who derive their learning from other sources. Delitzsch thinks that *vv.* 98—100 refer to teachers and elders who, like the Hellenizing Sadducees, were in danger of apostasy through their laxity, and persecuted the strict young zealot for God's law. But clearly

(מ) I understand more than the ancients, 100
Because I keep thy precepts.
(מ) I have restrained my feet from every evil way, 101
That I might keep thy word.
(מ) I have not departed from thy judgments: 102
For thou hast taught me.
(מ) How sweet are thy words unto my taste! 103
Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!
(מ) Through thy precepts I get understanding: 104
Therefore I hate every false way.

NUN.

(נ) Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, 105
And a light unto my path.
(נ) I have sworn, and I will perform *it*, 106
That *I* will keep thy righteous judgments.

the Psalmist's point is not the superiority of his own stricter interpretation of the law to the laxer interpretation of his teachers, but the superiority of the law to all other sources of instruction as a fountain of wisdom and prudence and discernment.

100. I have more discernment than the aged] It is not official 'elders' who are meant, but those whose long life has given them opportunity to learn by experience.

101. The meaning may be either, that he has studiously avoided all places of temptation in order that he might observe the law, or, that the self-restraint which has marked his conduct has sprung from no lower aim than the desire to obey God.

102. From thy judgements have I not turned aside;
For thou thyself hast instructed me.

God Himself has been his teacher, not men: therefore he has been enabled to keep in the path of right. Cp. lxxxvi. 11.

103. Cp. xix. 10; Job xxiii. 12; John iv. 32, 34.

my taste] Lit. *my palate*.

104. The study of God's law gives him the power of discernment to "prove the spirits," and reject all false teaching and laxity of conduct. Cp. *vv.* 29, 128.

105—112. *Nûn.* Knowing the value of God's law as the guide of life the Psalmist is resolved to keep it, whatever may be the risk.

105. Cp. Prov. vi. 23. God's word is a light to guide him safely amid the dangers which beset his path through the darkness of this world. Contrast the fate of the wicked, xxxv. 6.

106. *and I will perform* it] So Jer. *perseverabo*. But LXX, Syr., Targ., agree with the Mass. text in reading, with a slightly different vocalisation, *and have confirmed*, or *ratified it*, or perhaps, *have performed it*.

righteous judgments] Cp. *v.* 7.

107 (נ) I am afflicted very much:
Quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.
108 (נ) Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD,
And teach me thy judgments.
109 (נ) My soul *is* continually in my hand:
Yet do I not forget thy law.
110 (נ) The wicked have laid a snare for me:
Yet I erred not from thy precepts.
111 (נ) Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever:
For they *are* the rejoicing of my heart.
112 (נ) I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes
Alway, *even unto* the end.

SAMECH.

113 (ס) I hate *vain* thoughts:

107. Resolute observance of the law however has exposed him to persecution; therefore he prays God to preserve his life according to His promise. Cp. *v.* 25.

108. *the freewill offerings of my mouth*] The sacrifice of prayer and praise (Heb. xiii. 15); voluntary vows of devotion to the law. Cp. xix. 14.

teach me &c.] Cp. *v.* 12 &c. Vows of obedience are vain without Divine instruction and grace.

109. 'To put one's life in one's hand' is a metaphor for hazarding it (Judg. xii. 3; 1 Sam. xix. 5; xxviii. 21; Job xiii. 14), apparently because a treasure carried in the hand instead of being concealed is liable to be lost or snatched away. The reading of some MSS of the LXX *in thy hands* is doubtless a correction of a phrase which was not understood.

110. An explanation of the preceding verse. His life is threatened by enemies, apparently because of his devotion to the law, but no dangers or persecutions tempt him to indifference or apostasy. Cp. *vv.* 85—87.

yet I erred not] Yet went I not astray, as *v.* 176.

111. Israel through its sins had forfeited the land promised to it for an eternal inheritance (Gen. xiii. 15; Ex. xxxii. 13), and never wholly recovered it; but the godly Israelite has an eternal inheritance in the law of which no enemy can deprive him.

the rejoicing of my heart] Cp. Jer. xv. 16.

112. *alway*, even unto *the end*] R.V. for ever, even unto the end, rendering 'ĕqeb as in *v.* 33. Cp. *v.* 44 for the sense. But the meaning may be eternal (lit. *for ever*) is the reward. Cp. xix. 11. So the LXX, δι' ἀντάμειψιν, *for the sake of recompence*, Jer. *propter aeternam retributionem*.

113—120. *Samech.* The loyalty of the Psalmist and his hope contrasted with the faithlessness of the wicked and their fate.

113. vain *thoughts*] Rather as R.V., them that are of a double

But thy law do I love.
(ס) Thou *art* my hiding place and my shield: 114
I hope in thy word.
(ס) Depart from me, ye evildoers: 115
For I will keep the commandments of my God.
(ס) Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may 116
live:
And let me not be ashamed of my hope.
(ס) Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: 117
And I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.
(ס) Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy 118
statutes:
For their deceit *is* falsehood.
(ס) Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth *like* 119
dross:

mind, unstable waverers, half Israelites, half heathen. Cp. 1 Kings xviii. 21; James i. 8.

114. Cp. xxxii. 7; xxviii. 7; *vv.* 74, 81.

115. Cp. vi. 8.

for I will keep...my God] R.V. that I may keep. He would be rid of their presence, that they may no longer hinder him from keeping the law, by evil example or even by actual persecution. Significantly he calls God '*my* God,' implying that though they profess to serve Him, He is not really theirs.

116. But in order to keep God's commandments, he needs sustaining grace. Cp. li. 12; iii. 5; xxxvii. 17, 24.

be ashamed of my hope] Be disappointed and put to shame by the failure of my hope of deliverance. Cp. *v.* 166.

117. Cp. xviii. 35; xx. 2; xli. 3; xciv. 18.

and I will have respect unto] R.V. and shall have respect unto. The Ancient Versions appear to have read *will take delight in*, as in *vv.* 16, 47.

118. *Thou hast trodden down*] Rather, hast set at nought (R.V.), or hast rejected.

for their deceit is falsehood] Not, their crafty schemes are *vain* (R.V. marg.), doomed to be frustrated: but, the principles with which they deceive themselves and mislead others are false and baseless; therefore God rejects them. P.B.V. *for they imagine but deceit* is derived through the Vulg. (*quia iniusta cogitatio eorum*) from the LXX, which with Jer., Theod. and Syr. seems to have read *tar'ithām*, 'their thought,' for *tarmithām*, 'their deceit.' It is an Aramaic word, but the occurrence of an Aramaic word in so late a Psalm would not be impossible, and it may be the right reading.

119. *Thou puttest away*] God removes the wicked, as the refiner of metals throws away the dross. Cp. Jer. vi. 28—30; Ezek. xxii. 18, 19; Mal. iii. 2, 3. LXX however reads *I reckon*, and Aq., Symm., Jer. *thou*

Therefore I love thy testimonies.
120 (ם) My flesh trembleth for fear of thee;
And I am afraid of thy judgments.

AIN.

121 (ע) I have done judgment and justice:
Leave me not to mine oppressors.
122 (ע) Be surety for thy servant for good:
Let not the proud oppress me.
123 (ע) Mine eyes fail for thy salvation,
And for the word of thy righteousness.
124 (ע) Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy,
And teach me thy statutes.
125 (ע) I *am* thy servant; give me understanding,

reckonest (חישבת for הישבת). The former does not suit the next line, but the latter may be the true reading.

therefore I love thy testimonies] That I may avoid their fate: or perhaps, because I see thy righteousness manifested in these judgements. Cp. the next verse.

120. *trembleth for fear of thee*] Shudders for awe of thee, lit. of the hair standing on end with fright: *horrescit.*

thy judgments] Either acts of judgement, punishments inflicted upon the wicked, or the laws and ordinances in accordance with which they are punished. Reverent fear is the right complement of holy love. "The flesh is to be awed by Divine judgements, though the higher and surer part of the soul is strongly and freely tied with the cords of love" (Leighton).

121—128. *Ayin.* It is time for Jehovah to interpose on behalf of His servant, but the faithlessness of men only confirms his love for the law.

121. Conscious of his own rectitude the Psalmist prays that he may not be abandoned to the will of his oppressors. His conduct corresponds to the character of God. Cp. xxxiii. 5; lxxxix. 14.

122. *Be surety for thy servant for good*] "Guarantee Thy servant's welfare" (Kay). Cp. Gen. xliii. 9; Job xvii. 3; Is. xxxviii. 14. P.B.V. *make thou thy servant to delight in that which is good* follows Targ., Syr. and Kimchi, in explaining the verb from the sense which it bears in civ. 34 and elsewhere, but this cannot be the meaning. Coverdale was unfortunately misled by Münster's *dulce fac servo tuo id quod est bonum* to substitute this rendering in the Great Bible of 1539 for the correct rendering which he had given in 1535, "Be thou suertie for thy servant to do him good."

123. Cp. *vv.* 81, 82.

the word of thy righteousness] The promise of deliverance which Jehovah, as a righteous and therefore a faithful God, is pledged to fulfil.

124, 125. The remedy for the despondency of which *v.* 123 speaks. Fuller knowledge of God's law will sustain him under the trial. Cp.

That I may know thy testimonies.
(ע) *It is* time for *thee*, LORD, to work: 126
For they have made void thy law.
(ע) Therefore I love thy commandments 127
Above gold; yea, above fine gold.
(ע) Therefore I esteem all *thy* precepts concerning all 128
things to be right;
And I hate every false way.

PE.

(פ) Thy testimonies *are* wonderful: 129
Therefore doth my soul keep them.
(פ) The entrance of thy words giveth light; 130
It giveth understanding unto the simple.

xciv. 12 ff. In both verses he pleads his relation to Jehovah as His servant as the ground of his prayer.

126. It is time for Jehovah to act;
They have broken thy law.

High time it is for Jehovah to interpose with an act of judgement (cp. Jer. xviii. 23, "deal thou with them"), and vindicate His broken law. The second line is decisive in favour of this interpretation: otherwise the first line might be rendered, *it is time to act for Jehovah*, and *vv.* 124, 125 connected with it, in the sense that in such a crisis fresh knowledge is needed.

127. *Therefore*] The more men break God's commandments, the more the Psalmist will love them. Cp. xix. 10. P.B.V. *precious stone* comes through the Vulg. from the LXX.

128. *I esteem all* thy *precepts concerning all* things *to be right*] The Heb. of the Mass. text is most awkward and is almost certainly corrupt. We must read either *I esteem all thy precepts to be right* (Syr., R.V. marg.; cp. P.B.V.), or with LXX (Vulg.), Jer. *according to all thy precepts I direct* my goings (cp. Prov. xi. 5; xv. 21), which gives a good contrast to the following line, with which cp. *vv.* 29, 104.

129—136. *Pē.* The marvellousness of God's law: the Psalmist's prayers that it may be the rule of his life in spite of temptation: his grief at the neglect of it.

129. *wonderful*] Superhuman in their excellence: lit. *wonders*, the term often used of God's revelation of His power in miraculous acts (Ex. xv. 11; Ps. lxxvii. 11, 14; cp. *v.* 18).

therefore &c.] Their sublimity and mystery does not repel but attracts.

130. *The entrance of thy words*] R.V. **the opening of thy words**, the setting forth or unfolding of them. Cp. the use of the cognate verb in xlix. 4. P.B.V. *when thy word goeth forth* follows Luther's earlier rendering *wenn dein Wort ausgehet*.

the simple] Who need instruction to enable them to *discern* between right and wrong. Cp. xix. 7 note; cxvi. 6; Prov. i. 4.

131 (פ) I opened my mouth, and panted:
For I longed for thy commandments.
132 (פ) Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me,
As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.
133 (פ) Order my steps in thy word:
And let not any iniquity have dominion over me.
134 (פ) Deliver me from the oppression of man:
So will I keep thy precepts.
135 (פ) Make thy face to shine upon thy servant;
And teach me thy statutes.
136 (פ) Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,
Because they keep not thy law.

TZADDI.

137 (צ) Righteous *art* thou, O LORD,

131. *I opened* wide *my mouth* for the food of this illuminating informing instruction (Job xxix. 23; Ps. lxxxi. 10), *and panted* in my eagerness to receive it.

132. *Look* &c.] Turn unto me and be gracious unto me. So xxv. 16; lxxxvi. 16.

as thou usest to do &c.] Better, as is the right of those that love thy name. The plea is a bold one, but not too bold. The covenant gives those who love Jehovah's revelation of Himself (v. 11; lxix. 36) the right to claim His grace. Cp. Heb. vi. 10. The word for *right* is *mishpāṭ*, usually rendered *judgement*.

133. *Direct my footsteps*, or, *make my footsteps firm*, *in* or *by thy word*, *and* so *let no iniquity have dominion over me*, through stress either of temptation from within, or of trial from without. *Iniquity* or *vanity* is a comprehensive term for sin as moral worthlessness or antagonism to God; it is the very opposite of that law which is truth.

134. Redeem me from the oppression of man,
That I may observe thy precepts.

Cp. *vv.* 121, 122.

135. *Make thy face to shine*] Illuminate the darkness that surrounds me with the light of Thy favour. Cp. xxxi. 16.

and teach &c.] Cp. *v.* 12 &c. He desires the restoration of prosperity not merely for its own sake, but as an opportunity for gaining further knowledge.

136. Mine eyes run down with streams of water] For the phrase cp. Lam. iii. 48; i. 16. The righteous indignation which he feels at one moment for the lawlessness of men (*v.* 53) is tempered at another by profound sorrow and pity.

137—144. *Tsādē*. The righteousness, purity, and truth of God's law command the Psalmist's deepest love and reverence.

137. *Righteous*] This fundamental attribute of the Author of the law necessarily determines its character in all its aspects. Cp. xix. 9.

And upright *are* thy judgments.
(ץ) Thy testimonies *that* thou hast commanded *are* righteous 138
And very faithful.
(ץ) My zeal hath consumed me, 139
Because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.
(ץ) Thy word *is* very pure: 140
Therefore thy servant loveth it.
(ץ) I *am* small and despised: 141
Yet do not I forget thy precepts.
(ץ) Thy righteousness *is* an everlasting righteousness, 142
And thy law *is* the truth.
(ץ) Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: 143
Yet thy commandments *are* my delights.
(ץ) The righteousness of thy testimonies *is* everlasting: 144
Give me understanding, and I shall live.

upright are &c.] R.V. marg. *upright in thy judgements* is a possible but less obvious construction.

138. **Thou hast commanded thy testimonies in righteousness And faithfulness to the uttermost.**

Cp. *vv.* 86, 90, 144, 151; Deut. iv. 8. God's commandments which bear witness to His Will and man's duty are the expression of His absolute righteousness and of that faithfulness to His covenant which is an inalienable element of that righteousness. Cp. 2 Tim. ii. 13.

139. Cp. lxix. 9.

140. *pure*] Lit. *tried*, or, *refined*: like pure gold without any admixture of dross. Cp. xviii. 30; xii. 6.

141. *small and despised*] Insignificant in the eyes of men (not, as LXX, *young*, *νεώτερος*), and despised for his strict adherence to the law; but neither the glamour of worldly power nor the sting of worldly contempt can move him from his allegiance.

142. is *the truth*] Is truth. Cp. *vv.* 151, 160; xix. 9; John xvii. 17.

143. *have taken hold on me*] Have befallen me, lit. *found me*.

144. *The righteousness of thy testimonies* is *everlasting*] Righteous (lit. *righteousness*) are thy testimonies for ever, reflecting Thine own eternal righteousness. They are neither imperfect nor temporary. Cp. Matt. v. 17 ff.

give me understanding &c.] He ends this contemplation of the character of God's law with a prayer for fuller understanding of it, for through knowledge of it and obedience to it man really *lives*, truly realises the purpose of his being. Cp. *vv.* 17, 77, 116; Prov. iv. 4, 13; Deut. xxxii. 47.

KOPH.

145 (ק) I cried with *my* whole heart;
Hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes.
146 (ק) I cried unto thee; save me,
And I shall keep thy testimonies.
147 (ק) I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried:
I hoped in thy word.
148 (ק) Mine eyes prevent the *night* watches,
That *I* might meditate in thy word.
149 (ק) Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness:
O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.
150 (ק) They draw nigh that follow after mischief:
They are far from thy law.

145–152. *Qōph.* Unceasing prayer to be kept faithful in the midst of faithlessness is the rule of the Psalmist's life.

145. **I have called with my whole heart; answer me, Jehovah**] The perfect tense expresses the habit of his whole life.

146. I have called unto thee; save me,
That I may observe thy testimonies.
147. In the earliest twilight did I cry for help,
(While) I waited with hope for thy words.

Lit. *In the twilight I was beforehand and cried for help.* With *l.* 2 cp. *vv.* 74, 81, 114.

148. *Mine eyes prevent* [or *are beforehand with*, the same word as in *v.* 147] *the* night *watches*] The night was divided into three watches by the Israelites (Lam. ii. 19; Judg. vii. 19; 1 Sam. xi. 11). He compares himself to a sentinel who wakes before it is time for him to go on duty. Possibly, as Baethgen suggests, there is a reference to the author's duties as a Levite. Before the hour when he must rise for his watch in the Temple he is awake, and meditating on God's words. Cp. *v.* 62; lxiii. 6.

149. *according to thy judgment*] Or, *ordinance*; "the gracious rule of action Thou hast laid down for Thyself; Thy method of dealing with those that seek Thee early" (Kay). P.B.V. and R.V. marg. *as thou art wont* take *mishpāt* ('judgement') to mean *rule, custom.* Cp. A.V. of *v.* 132. The LXX, Targ. and Jer. support the singular, but if the plural be read, according to the Massoretic vocalisation, as in *v.* 156, the sense will not differ greatly. *Thy judgements* will mean the various examples of God's rule of action which declare His will to preserve the life of His servants.

150, 151. They draw nigh that maliciously persecute me,
That have gone far from thy law.

(ק) Thou *art* near, O LORD; 151
And all thy commandments *are* truth.
(ק) Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old 152
That thou hast founded them for ever.

RESH.

(ר) Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: 153
For I do not forget thy law.
(ר) Plead my cause, and deliver me: 154
Quicken me according to thy word.
(ר) Salvation *is* far from the wicked: 155
For they seek not thy statutes.
(ר) Great *are* thy tender mercies, O LORD: 156
Quicken me according to thy judgments.

Thou art nigh, Jehovah &c.

These two verses are closely connected. When my persecutors draw near to assail me, Thou art near to defend (lxix. 18; xxxiv. 18; Deut. iv. 7); though they have abandoned Thy law, I know the truth of all its commandments, and will not be tempted to join them in apostasy. The reading of LXX, Symm., Syr., Jer., *my persecutors in malice* seems preferable to that of the Mass. text *that follow after malice*. The difference is one of vocalisation only.

152. **Of old have I known from thy testimonies, that** &c. (R.V.). Men may affirm or act as if they believed that God's laws are obsolete: but from the study of those laws themselves the Psalmist has long ago learnt their eternal validity; and his deeply rooted convictions cannot be shaken by the contempt or the threats of his enemies.

153—160. *Rēsh.* More urgent prayers for deliverance from his persecutors. Note the thrice-repeated 'quicken me.'

153. *Consider mine affliction*] Lit. *see*. It was the prayer of Israel in exile (Lam. i. 9), reminding God of His own words when He was about to deliver His people from Egypt (Ex. iii. 7).

154. *Plead my cause*] The dispute between him and his persecutors is represented as a lawsuit: will not Jehovah be his advocate? Cp. xxxv. 1; xliii. 1; Is. li. 22.

deliver me] **Redeem me**, as from bondage. Cp. Ex. vi. 6; xv. 13; Ps. xix. 14, and the frequent description of Jehovah as Israel's Redeemer from exile in Is. xl—lxvi.

155. *seek not*] **Or, study not.** Cp. *vv.* 45, 94.

156. *Great* are *thy tender mercies*] **Thy compassions** (*v.* 77). Cp. 2 Sam. xxiv. 14; Neh. ix. 19, 27, 31 (A.V. *thy manifold mercies*); Dan. ix. 18.

quicken me &c.] Cp. *v.* 149*b*.

157 (ר) Many *are* my persecutors and mine enemies;
Yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.
158 (ר) I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved;
Because they kept not thy word.
159 (ר) Consider how I love thy precepts:
Quicken me, O LORD, according to thy loving-kindness.
160 (ר) Thy word *is* true *from* the beginning:
And every one of thy righteous judgments *endureth* for ever.

SCHIN.

161 (ש) Princes have persecuted me without a cause:
But my heart standeth in awe of thy word.
162 (ש) I rejoice at thy word,
As one that findeth great spoil.
163 (ש) I hate and abhor lying:
But thy law do I love.

158. I have seen the treacherous dealers and felt loathing.
Because they have not observed thy word.

Apostate Israelites are meant, faithless to the covenant. Far from being attracted by them, he felt disgust and loathing (exxxix. 21) as he watched them and their ways.

159. *Consider how* &c.] Lit. *see that* &c.: or possibly (cp. *v.* 153), *look* upon me, *for I love thy precepts.*

160. The sum of thy word is truth, or perhaps, as LXX, Jer., of thy words. If he reckons up all God's words of command or promise, their sum total is truth. Cp. John xiv. 6.

161—168. *Shīn* (and *Sīn*). God's law fills the Psalmist's heart with awe, joy, love, and gratitude; he has been diligent in its observance. It is not the boasting of the Pharisee, but the honest profession of a good conscience. This stanza and that of *Mēm* (*vv.* 97 ff.) contain no petition.

161. His loyalty to the law has not been shaken by the gratuitous hostility of the civil authorities; rather has he feared to offend God. By *princes* are probably meant Israelite nobles, who exercised judicial and administrative functions. Cp. *v.* 23; Jer. xxvi. 10 ff.; Ezra ix. 1, 2; x. 8, 14; Neh. ix. 32, 34, 38.

thy word] So the *Q'rē*, with Syr., Targ.; R.V. thy words, with *K'thībh*, LXX, Jer.

162. Holy awe is not inconsistent with holy joy. Cp. *vv.* 119, 120; Matt. xxviii. 8.

as one &c.] Cp. Is. ix. 3.

163. I hate falsehood and will abhor it] *Falsehood* denotes heathenism and heathenish tendencies, in contrast to the *truth* of God's law. Cp. *vv.* 29, 104, 128. The best attested text reads *will abhor*.

(שׁ) Seven *times* a day do I praise thee 164
Because of thy righteous judgments.
(שׁ) Great peace have they which love thy law: 165
And nothing *shall* offend them.
(שׁ) LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, 166
And done thy commandments.
(שׁ) My soul hath kept thy testimonies; 167
And *I* love them exceedingly.
(שׁ) I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: 168
For all my ways *are* before thee.

TAU.

(ת) Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: 169
Give me understanding according to thy word.

164. *Seven* times *a day*] Not merely morning noon and night (lv. 17), but constantly and repeatedly. Cp. Prov. xxiv. 16; &c.

righteous judgments] Cp. *v.* 7, &c.

165. Those who love the law find it a spring of constant inward peace, even in the midst of outward persecution: and **they have none occasion of stumbling** (R.V.). Cp. 1 John ii. 10, and the LXX here, οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτοῖς σκάνδαλον. "They walk firmly and safely on the clear path of duty" without stumbling and falling through sin. Cp. Ezek. xviii. 30, "Repent...and iniquity shall not be a stumblingblock unto you." They are not 'scandalized,' made to stumble and driven into scepticism by the sight of the anomalies of the world, such as suffering goodness and triumphant wickedness. "They are free from the 'stumbling of heart' (1 Sam. xxv. 31)—the paralysing weakness—which follows on the consciousness of having wronged, or of bearing ill-will to, a brother" (Kay). The P.B.V. *and they are not offended at it* appears to be Coverdale's mistaken paraphrase of the Zürich Version, "und werdend sich niemermer stossen."

166 *a.* From Gen. xlix. 18, with the substitution of a later word *śibbēr* for *hope* for the sake of the initial letter.

and have *done thy commandments*] To the LXX the phrase seemed over-bold, and they substituted *and loved* (cp. *v.* 163). The same feeling may have prompted Coverdale to render "done *after* thy commandments."

167 *a.* Cp. **129** *b.*

and I love] P.B.V. *and loved* is from LXX through Vulg. So also Jer.

168. With the courage of a good conscience he appeals to God's omniscience in proof of the sincerity of his purpose.

before thee] Cp. for the phrase xxxviii. 9, and for the thought, Heb. iv. 13.

169—176. *Tāv.* Concluding petitions for understanding and deliverance, for the grace of thankfulness, for help and guidance.

169, 170. These verses are closely connected. *My cry* denotes

170 (ת) Let my supplication come before thee:
Deliver me according to thy word.
171 (ת) My lips shall utter praise,
When thou hast taught me thy statutes.
172 (ת) My tongue shall speak of thy word:
For all thy commandments *are* righteousness.
173 (ת) Let thine hand help me;
For I have chosen thy precepts.
174 (ת) I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD;
And thy law *is* my delight.
175 (ת) Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee;
And let thy judgments help me.
176 (ת) I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant;

literally the outward expression of urgent entreaty in a shrill passionate outcry (cp. xvii. 1 note): *my supplication for favour* refers to the substance of his prayer. Once more he prays for fuller understanding or discernment, and for the freedom of outward circumstance which will enable him to use it. As the ground of both prayers he pleads God's word of promise.

171, 172. **Let my lips pour forth praise,**
Because thou teachest me thy statutes.
Let my tongue sing of thy word,
For all thy commandments are righteousness.

The optative form of the verb in *v.* 172 is in favour of a similar rendering in *v.* 171. He prays for a spirit of joyous, exuberant thankfulness for God's continuous teaching, and for the character of the law which is the substance of that teaching.

173. Let thine hand be ready to help me (R.V.).

for &c.] *v.* 174 is best taken in close connexion with *v.* 173 *b*. He pleads three reasons for an answer to his prayers:—he has deliberately resolved to obey God's precepts (cp. *v.* 30; Deut. xxx. 19); he has long been waiting eagerly for deliverance from the hindrances to obedience which surround him (cp. *vv.* 40, 166); his devotion has been no grudging service, but his constant delight (*v.* 24 &c.).

175. *and it shall praise thee*] Or, that it may praise thee. The object of the life for which he has prayed so often—life prolonged, revived, invigorated, freed from the persecutions and trials which impede and prevent the exercise of its full activities—is just this, that his whole self may praise God (cxlvi. 2).

and let thy judgments help me] Either the ordinances which are the rule of his life (102, 106), or acts of judgement, by which his enemies are punished.

176. *I have gone astray like a lost sheep*] So apparently the Ancient Versions, but the Massoretic accentuation connects *like a lost sheep* with *seek*, and suggests the rendering, *If I go astray, seek thy*

For I do not forget thy commandments.

servant like a lost sheep: for &c. It need not surprise us if, after all his professions of fidelity and constancy, even including an explicit declaration that in spite of intimidation he had not gone astray from God's commandments (*v.* 110), the Psalmist concludes with a confession of weakness and failure, actual or possible, and acknowledges that he has "erred and strayed from God's ways like a lost sheep"; while at the same moment he pleads as the reason why God should not forsake him that he has not forgotten God's commandments. The confession of failure is not inconsistent with the profession of devotion. As in Ps. xix. 12—14, which may have been in the Psalmist's mind, the thought of the law naturally leads up to the thought of his own frailty and need to be brought back when he wanders. Cp. Is. liii. 6; Ps. xcv. 10. If he has erred, it is a temporary and involuntary aberration: his will and purpose to serve God are unchanged, and he prays that God will not abandon him.

It seems however more in accordance with the general spirit of the Psalm to suppose that the Psalmist is describing his outward circumstances rather than his spiritual state, the helplessness of his condition rather than his moral failures. He is a wanderer in the wilderness of the world; like a sheep that has been separated from the flock he is exposed to constant dangers, and therefore he beseeches God not to leave him to wander alone, but in accordance with His promise (Ezek. xxxiv. 11 ff.) to seek for him, for amid all these dangers he does not forget God's law. So Israel in the Dispersion is compared to a strayed sheep, Jer. l. 6, 17; cp. Is. xxvii. 13.

lost] The word means 'strayed and in danger of perishing.'

PSALM CXX.

The Psalmist begins by recalling his past experience of answered prayer (1): he prays that he may be delivered from the intrigues of unscrupulous enemies and that just retribution may be meted out to them (2—4): and laments that his lot is cast among men who are no better than rude barbarians (5—7).

It is impossible to determine with any certainty the circumstances which called forth the Psalm. Some commentators have thought that the Psalmist speaks on behalf of Israel, and refers to the misrepresentations by which the Samaritans stopped the building of the Temple (Ezra iv. 1—6), or to one of the subsequent occasions upon which they sent false accusations to the Persian court to hinder the rebuilding of the walls (Ezra iv. 7 ff.), or to the opposition to Nehemiah which was headed by Sanballat and Tobiah (Neh. ii. 10, 19; iv. 1, 7 ff.; vi. 1 ff.). But the hostility from which the Psalmist is suffering seems rather to be of a personal nature; and like the author of Ps. cxix he may have been a godly Israelite who (with those likeminded) was persecuted and calumniated by the godless party in the community. We may compare

the thanksgiving of the son of Sirach for his deliverance "from the snare of a slanderous tongue" which had almost proved his ruin (Ecclus. li. 1 ff.), and Baethgen refers to Ps. xii of the "Psalms of Solomon," which closely resembles this Psalm, and, though belonging to a later time, may have sprung out of similar circumstances. Ryle and James suppose that the accuser against whom that Psalm is directed was a Sadducee, who had brought ruin and perhaps death on some prominent Pharisee by laying information against him at the court. A part of the Psalm may be quoted for illustration:

"O Lord, deliver my soul from the lawless and evil man,
From a lawless and whispering tongue, that speaketh false and crafty words with a froward intent.
The words of the evil man's tongue are like fire in a threshing floor kindling the straw thereof.
He sojourneth (?) among men to set houses aflame with a false tongue,
To hew down trees of gladness...and lawlessly with whispering lips to confound houses with strife."

Though our Psalm appears primarily to refer to the sufferings of a pious Israelite among unsympathetic and hostile countrymen, it may easily, as a Pilgrim Psalm, have received a national application to the circumstances of Israel in the Dispersion.

On the title, **A song of ascents** (R.V.), or **A song for the goings up**, prefixed to this and the next fourteen Psalms, see *Introd.* p. xxviii. They are probably taken from a collection of the songs sung by pilgrims as they went up to the Feasts at Jerusalem.

A Song of degrees.

120 In my distress I cried unto the LORD,
And he heard me.
2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips,
And from a deceitful tongue.

**1. In my distress I called unto Jehovah,
And he answered me.**

The Psalmist calls to mind past answers to prayer as an encouragement to fresh prayer in his present distress. Cp. iii. 4. This is a simpler and more natural explanation of the verse than to take it as a confident anticipation of a favourable answer, *I call...and he will surely answer me*; or to suppose that the Psalmist is looking back upon trouble in the past, and that *vv.* 2—4 are the prayer to which he refers in *v.* 1.

2—4. The earnestness of the prayer and the severity of the condemnation point to a person or a party, fomenting feud and strife in the community by calumny and false accusations, and resolutely refusing all attempts to promote harmony.

2. Cp. lii. 1—4; Mic. vi. 12.

What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done
unto thee,
Thou false tongue?
Sharp arrows of the mighty, 4
With coals of juniper.
Woe is me, that I sojourn *in* Mesech, 5

3, 4. What should he give thee, and what should he add to thee, thou deceitful tongue? Arrows of a warrior sharpened, with glowing coals of broom. The tongue, or rather its owner, is addressed. God is the subject of the verbs, and the form of expression is suggested by the familiar formula, "So God do to thee and more also" (1 Sam. iii. 17). lit. "So shall God do to thee and so shall he add." Ver. 4 is the answer to the question. The just retribution which is to overtake the deceitful man is described in terms suggested by his offence (cp. vii. 12 ff.). He has shot his arrows of slander or false accusation at the innocent, but a mightier than he, even God Himself, will pierce him with the arrows of His judgement: he has kindled the fire of strife by his falsehoods, but the lightnings of Divine wrath will consume him. For the comparison of the evil tongue to a bow which shoots arrows of falsehood see Jer. ix. 3; Prov. xxvi. 18 f.; cp. too Jer. ix. 8, "Their tongue is a murderous arrow": its power of mischief is described as fire in Prov. xvi. 27 (cp. James iii. 6). Glowing coals are a metaphor for Divine judgements in cxl. 10.

This is the simplest and most natural explanation. Several other explanations have however been proposed, e.g. (1) "What profit will thy false tongue bring thee, O slanderer? It is as sharp arrows" &c., but this seems to lack point. (2) Others suppose that God is addressed and that the tongue is the subject of the sentence: "What profit can the deceitful tongue bring to Thee?"—a sarcastic question, like that in Job x. 3 ff. Can it be that Jehovah tolerates the deceitful man, because thereby He gains some advantage? Ver. 4 will then be an equally sarcastic answer. The gain that accrues from his existence is mischief and strife. But apart from grammatical difficulties, such an idea is unsuited to the context.

coals of juniper] Heb. *rōthem*, broom, from which the Arabs still manufacture charcoal of the finest quality, which makes the hottest fire and retains heat for the longest time.

5—7. The Psalmist laments that he is compelled to live among neighbours who are as hostile as rude barbarians.

5. *I sojourn...I dwell*] The perfect tenses of the Heb. are rightly translated by the present. The experience is not a thing of the past. He has long dwelt and still must dwell among these uncongenial neighbours. P.B.V. (=Great Bible of 1539) *Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech and to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar* is from Münster, *Heu mihi quod cum Maesech peregrinari cogor, et habitare cum tabernaculis Kedar.* Coverdale's

That I dwell in the tents of Kedar!
6 My soul hath long dwelt
With him that hateth peace.
7 I *am for* peace: but when I speak, they *are* for war.

earlier version was, *Wo is me, yᵗ my banishmet endureth so lõge: I dwell in the tabernacles of the sorowfull*; derived from the Zurich: "Ach dass mein elend so lang waret, ich wonen in den hütten der traurigen."

Meshech, mentioned in Gen. x. 2 as a son of Japheth, was a barbarous people living between the Black Sea and the Caspian, probably the Moschi of Herodotus (iii. 94), and Mushki of the Assyrian inscriptions: *Kedar*, mentioned in Gen. xxv. 13 as the second son of Ishmael, was one of the wild tribes which roamed through the Arabian desert, "whose hand was against every man" (Gen. xvi. 12). Obviously the Psalmist cannot mean to describe himself as actually living among peoples so remote from one another, but applies these typical names of barbarian tribes to his own compatriots, as we might speak of Turks and Tartars.

in the tents] R.V. among the tents.

6. Too long hath my soul had her dwelling
With the haters of peace.

The sensitive 'soul' feels the inhumanity of their conduct.

7. Lit. **I am peace**: cp. cix. 4, "I am prayer."

but when I speak &c.] If I so much as speak to them, or perhaps, as P.B.V., "speak unto them thereof," make overtures of friendship, they threaten fiercer hostility.

PSALM CXXI.

This exquisite Psalm, inspired by perfect trust in Jehovah's guardianship of His people, was probably composed to be sung by pilgrims going up to the Feasts at Jerusalem, possibly at the point where they first caught sight of the goal of their journey (*v.* 1). We seem to hear in it the voices of the pilgrims encouraging one another with words of faith and hope, as they journeyed to Jerusalem, once more in the centre of national life and worship to realise the relation of Jehovah to Israel and to each individual Israelite as their guardian in all the vicissitudes of life. Though we cannot determine the precise manner in which it was sung, it is specially adapted for antiphonal singing, and gains in point and vividness if it is divided between different voices. It consists of four pairs of verses. In the first pair of verses, we may conjecture, one of the pilgrims (or a group of pilgrims) expressed his calm trust in Jehovah's help. In the next pair of verses another singer or group of singers responded with words of prayer and assurance; and *vv.* 5—8 may have been sung antiphonally, verse by verse, or in pairs of verses.

A Song of degrees.

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, 121 1
From whence cometh my help.
My help *cometh* from the LORD, 2
Which made heaven and earth.
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: 3
He that keepeth thee will not slumber.
Behold, he that keepeth Israel 4
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.
The LORD *is* thy keeper: 5

1. **I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains:**
From whence shall my help come? (R.V.)

The mountains are not the "mountains of Israel" (Ezek. vi. 2 and often), to which the exile turns his longing eyes, but the mountains upon which Zion is built (lxxxvii. 1; cxxv. 1, 2; cxxxiii. 3), the seat of Jehovah's throne (lxxviii. 68), from which He sends help to His people (iii. 4; xx. 2; cxxxiv. 3). The question of the second line (which cannot be taken as a relative clause) is not one of doubt or despondency, but is simply asked to introduce the answer which follows in *v.* 2. That answer gives a deeper turn to the thought of the question. It is not from the mountains of Zion, but from Jehovah Who has fixed His earthly dwelling-place there that help comes.

2. *Maker of heaven and earth* is a frequent epithet of Jehovah in the later Psalms (cxv. 15; cxxiv. 8; cxxxiv. 3; cxlvi. 6). It is the guarantee of His power to help. It contrasts His omnipotence with the impotence of the heathen gods "that have not made the heavens and the earth" (Jer. x. 11).

3. 4. It is possible to suppose that the speaker of *vv.* 1, 2 addresses himself, but it is more natural to hear in these verses the voice of another speaker, answering the first with words of encouragement.

3. It is maintained by some grammarians that the negative particle *'al* "sometimes expresses merely the subjective feeling and sympathy of the speaker with the act" (Davidson, *Syntax*, § 128, R. 2), and consequently the rendering of the A.V. is retained in the R.V. Ver. 4 will then repeat the 'subjective feeling' of *v.* 3 as a categorical assertion. But here at any rate it is preferable, with R.V. marg., to retain the usual deprecative meaning of *'al*; **May he not suffer thy foot to be moved; may he that keepeth thee not slumber?** and in *v.* 4 the speaker as it were corrects himself, or possibly another speaker chimes in: 'Nay, there is no need for such a prayer, for Israel's keeper never sleeps.' Israel's watchman is not like a human sentinel, liable to be overcome by sleep upon his watch; He is not such as the heathen suppose their gods to be (1 Kings xviii. 27), but unceasing in His vigilance. *He that keepeth Israel* may be an allusion to Gen. xxviii. 15.

5—8. The comforting thought that Jehovah is the guardian of Israel

The LORD *is* thy shade upon thy right hand.
6 The sun shall not smite thee by day,
Nor the moon by night.
7 The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil:
He shall preserve thy soul.
8 The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in
From this time forth, and *even* for evermore.

is developed and appropriated to each individual Israelite. *Vv.* 5, 7 may have been sung by one singer or group of singers, and *vv.* 6, 8 as a response by another singer or group of singers: or perhaps *vv.* 5, 6 by one, and *vv.* 7, 8 by another.

5. *thy shade upon thy right hand*] 'Shade' seems simply to denote 'protection' generally, the idea of the metaphor being lost (xci. 1; Num. xiv. 9); hence it can be joined with "upon thy right hand," that being the usual position of the champion or protector (xvi. 8; cix. 31). The phrase may however be a poetical abbreviation for *Jehovah is thy shade, (he is) on thy right hand.*

6. The metaphor is naturally suggested by 'shade' in *v.* 5. Sunstroke is of course common and dangerous in the East (2 Kings iv. 19; Is. xlix. 10); and the belief in 'moonstroke' was and is widely spread.

7, 8. *shall preserve*] Kenter. with R.V., shall keep, to mark the connexion with the preceding verses.

7. Cp. 1 Thess. v. 23.

8. *thy going out and thy coming in*] All thy undertakings and occupations. Cp. Deut. xxviii. 6; &c. Perhaps too a special allusion to the pilgrims' journey to Jerusalem is intended.

from this time forth, and [omit *even*] *for evermore*] Personal hopes here lose themselves in national hopes: but in the light of the Gospel the individual can appropriate these words to himself. Cp. xv. 18.

Every pious Jew, as he leaves or enters the house, touches the *Mezuza*, i.e. the small metal cylinder affixed to the right-hand door-post, containing a piece of parchment inscribed with Deut. vi. 4—9. xi. 13—21, and recites this verse. Kitto's *Biblical Cyclopaedia*, s.v. *Mezuza*.

PSALM CXXII.

The home of the author of this Psalm was in the country, at a distance from Jerusalem. He recalls the joy with which he heard the invitation of his neighbours to join the company of pilgrims (Luke ii. 44) going up to one of the great Feasts (*v.* 1). He describes the overwhelming impression made upon his mind by the sight of the city as they halted in its gates (*vv.* 2, 3), and by the recollections of its ancient glories as the religious and civil centre of the national life (*vv.* 4, 5). With a burst of heartfelt enthusiasm he bids men pray and prays himself for its future welfare (*vv.* 6—9).

The Psalm may best be explained thus, as the meditation of a pilgrim

who, after returning to the quiet of his home, reflects upon the happy memories of his pilgrimage. This is the most natural interpretation of the past tenses in *vv.* 1, 2, 'I was glad'...'Our feet were standing.' Many commentators, however, render 'Our feet are standing,' and regard the Psalm as uttered at the moment when the pilgrims have reached their goal.

The Heb. text, with which agree Cod. ℵ of the LXX, Aq and Symm., adds *of David* to the title: but it is omitted by other MSS of the LXX, by the Targ., and by Jer. The addition may have been suggested by v. 5; but the Psalm cannot have been written by David, for the Temple is standing, and the opening words are clearly those of one who has to travel to it from a distance; nor even in the time of the monarchy, for *vv.* 4, 5 appear to look back across the Exile to a distant past. Most probably it belongs to the time of Nehemiah, when the walls had been rebuilt, and means taken to provide the city with an adequate population. *Vv.* 6 ff. may perhaps be explained from Neh. xi. 1 ff.[1]

A Song of degrees of David.

I was glad when they said unto me, 122
Let us go *into* the house of the LORD.
Our feet shall stand
Within thy gates, O Jerusalem.

1. The Psalmist recalls his joy when his neighbours summoned him to join in the pilgrimage to the sanctuary.

I was glad] The A.V. rightly follows the Ancient Versions in translating the verb as a past.

Let us go into &c.] Rather, **We will go to the house of Jehovah.** Cp. Is. ii. 3.

2—4. The arrival of the pilgrims, and the impression produced by the sight of the city.

2. *Our feet shall stand*] The verb cannot be rendered thus. It may mean 'have been and still are standing,' hence R.V. *are standing*; or were standing, which is the most natural rendering. The somewhat unusual combination of the participle with the substantive verb may be an indication of the lateness of the Psalm (the idiom is common in Nehemiah), but it gives prominence to the idea of duration (Driver, *Tenses*, § 135. 5). It suggests that when the pilgrims reached the city gates, they halted for a while, spell-bound by the sight of its magnificence, and by the memories of its ancient glories.

[1] The use of the relative שֶׁ (*sh*) in this Psalm (*vv.* 3, 4) and in cxxiv. 1, 2, 6; cxxix. 6, 7; cxxxiii. 2, 3; cxxxv. 2, 8, 10; cxxxvi. 23; cxxxvii. 8, 9; cxliv. 15; cxlvi. 3, 5, points to a late date, though "our imperfect knowledge of the history and usage of שֶׁ" makes the argument an uncertain one (see Driver, *Lit. of O.T.* p. 450): and the use of the participle and verb substantive as in *v.* 2 ('were standing' = עֹמְדוֹת הָיוּ), though not unknown in the earlier stages of the language, becomes common in later books, and is characteristic of Nehemiah.

3 Jerusalem *is* builded
As a city that is compact together:
4 Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD,
Unto the testimony of Israel,
To give thanks unto the name of the LORD.
5 For there are set thrones of judgment,
The thrones of the house of David.

3. The exclamation of the pilgrims. Jerusalem that art built up as a city which is compacted together, *lit. joined together for itself*. This is generally understood to refer to the restoration of the city: the walls have been rebuilt, the ruined houses repaired, the gaps and vacant spaces filled up; the city once more presents an aspect of unity, continuity, solidity, widely different from the dilapidated condition in which Nehemiah found it (Neh. ii. 17; vii. 4). But the verb is used metaphorically as well as literally (e.g. xxiv. 20), and it is possible that the sight of the restored city is to the poet's eye an emblem of the mutual harmony of its inhabitants or of the unity of the nation. Such a sense is suggested by Coverdale's beautiful rendering *that is at unity with itself*, which seems to be a paraphrase of the Vulg. *cuius participatio eius in idipsum*. LXX ὃς ἡ μετοχὴ αὐτῆς ἐπιτραυτό, 'whose fellowship is together.' This rendering however presumes a slightly different reading of the text.

The Targ. interprets the words of the heavenly Jerusalem—'Jerusalem which is built in the firmament like a city that is united together upon earth.'

4. Whither the tribes went up, (even) the tribes of Jah,
(As) a testimony for Israel,
To give thanks to the name of Jehovah.

The perfect tense might denote "custom in the past continuing into the present" and so be rendered *go up*, but it is more natural to take it as referring to the ancient custom of the days before the Exile. The poet idealises the past and forgets the division of the nation. The practice of pilgrimage to the Temple at Jerusalem is called a *testimony*, i.e. a law or institution which bore witness to Israel's relation to Jehovah as His people. Cp. lxxxi. 4, 5; Ex. xxiii. 17; Deut. xvi. 16.

5. For there were set (lit. *sat*) **thrones for judgement]** For *throne* cp. ix. 4, 7. The poet is still looking back to the times before the Exile. Jerusalem was the centre of the nation's civil life as well as of its religious life. Reference is made to a supreme tribunal at Jerusalem in Deut. xvii. 8 ff.

the thrones of the house of David] The king appears to have been assisted in his judicial functions by members of the royal family. Cp. Jer. xxi. 11, 12. If the verb in the preceding line is taken as a present (*are set*), 'thrones of the house of David' must mean tribunals exercising a jurisdiction corresponding to that of the royal family in ancient times.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
They shall prosper that love thee.
Peace be within thy walls,
And prosperity within thy palaces.
For my brethren and companions' sakes,

6—9. The recollection of the past glories of Jerusalem leads the Psalmist to pray and bid others pray for her future welfare. A new era of hope seems to be opening before her.

6. *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem*] This is probably the right rendering; but the phrase might also be rendered *Inquire for the welfare of Jerusalem*, or *salute her*, the customary salutation being "Is it well (lit. peace) with thee?" or "Peace be unto thee." Cp. Jer. xv. 5. The rendering of the LXX, "Ask now for intercession the things which belong unto peace" contains the phrase (τὰ πρὸς εἰρήνην) used by our Lord as He entered Jerusalem (Luke xix. 42, τὰ πρὸς εἰρήνην). May not the whole Psalm have been in His mind at the moment, as Ps. cxxxvii appears to have been (cp. 44, ἐδαφιοῦσιν σε καὶ τὰ τέκνα σου ἐν σοί), suggesting a realistic contrast between the peace which might have been her lot, and the doom of her enemies which she was blindly dragging down upon herself?

they shall prosper] Better, may they prosper (R.V. marg.).

that love thee] The reading *may thy lovers prosper* (cf. cxviii. 151, found in one MS. but in no Ancient Version, is at first sight attractive. But the prayer for the prosperity of those who love Jerusalem follows naturally on the invitation to them to pray for her welfare. Contrast the anathema on those who hate Zion in cxxix. 5. The expression may have been suggested by Lam. i. 5, "her enemies prosper." The words for *lover* and *enemy* in Heb. differ by one letter only (אֹהֵב—אֹיֵב).

7. *walls...palaces*] The same words are found in xlviii. 13. *Chēl* denotes the outer wall or rampart: *armon* includes all conspicuous buildings, such as forts and towers as well as palaces.

There is an assonance between the words for 'peace' (*shālōm*) and 'prosperity' (*shalvah*) and the name Jerusalem. Whether the name of the city is etymologically connected with the root SHLM is doubtful, but the sound of the name suggests the words for peace and prosperity, and the Psalmist prays that the *nomen* may be an *omen*, and that Jerusalem may enjoy the peace of which her name is an augury.

8. *For my brethren and companions' sakes*] Not, for the sake of the nation in general, though doubtless the welfare of the nation was dependent on the welfare of the metropolis: but for the sake of those dwelling in Jerusalem, to whom he feels himself attached in the bonds of closest fellowship. There may be a reference to the circumstances described in Neh. xi. 1 ff. Some difficulty was found in securing a sufficient population for the city: ten per cent. of the country people were chosen by lot to come into the city; and others volunteered to reside there. "And the people blessed all the men that willingly offered themselves to dwell in Jerusalem."

I will now say, Peace *be* within thee.
9 Because of the house of the LORD our God
I will seek thy good.

I will now say] Let me now say, Peace &c.: or more probably, Let me now speak peace concerning thee, i.e. pray for thy welfare.

9. *For the sake of the house* &c.] Dear as Jerusalem is to him as the centre of the nation's civil life, it is yet dearer as the centre of the national religion.

I will [let me] *seek thy good*] So Neh. ii. 10, "a man to seek the good of the children of Israel."

PSALM CXXIII.

This touching Psalm is an utterance of unfaltering faith and patience in the face of contemptuous scorn and mockery. The Psalmist speaks in *v.* 1 in the singular as a leader or representative of the people, and passes naturally into the plural in *vv.* 2 ff. as he joins all the members of the suffering community with himself in faith and prayer. The Psalm may have been written about the time of Nehemiah's first visit to Jerusalem. It was a report of the miserable plight of the remnant of the returned exiles which induced him to go there (Neh. i. 3); and he speaks repeatedly of the contempt and scorn with which the Samaritans and the heathen neighbours of the Jews viewed his efforts for the restoration of the city, until the success of those efforts provoked them to measures of active hostility. See Neh. ii. 19; iv. 1—4, 7 ff. The simile of *v.* 2 may naturally be connected with a phrase characteristic of the narrative of that period, *the hand* or *the good hand of our God*. Cp. Ezra vii. 6, 9, 28; viii. 18, 22, 31; Neh. ii. 8, 18.

Von Gerlach, quoted by Kay, well observes, "To enter fully into the temper of mind exhibited in the Psalms of this period we must consider what the expectations of the restored Jews were. They looked for the coming in of Messianic glories;—and here they were a laughing-stock to the Samaritans. What a school of patience and high toned spiritual hope was this!" Comp. introd. to Ps. cxxxi.

A Song of degrees.

123 Unto thee lift I up mine eyes,
O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

1, 2. The eye of hope upturned to Jehovah.

1. *lift I up*] Lit. *have I lifted up*; I have long been and still am looking to Jehovah for the help which He alone can give. Cp. cxxi. 1; xxv. 15.

O thou that dwellest in the heavens] Rather, **O thou that sittest throned in heaven** (cp. ii. 4), as the supreme King and Governor of the world. Cp. the frequent use of the phrase 'God of heaven' in Ezra and Nehemiah.

Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* unto the hand of
their masters,
And as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her
mistress;
So our eyes *wait* upon the LORD our God,
Until that he have mercy upon us.
Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: 3
For we are exceedingly filled *with* contempt.
Our soul is exceedingly filled 4
With the scorning of those that are at ease,
And with the contempt of the proud.

2. **Behold, as the eyes of servants (look) unto the hand of their masters,**
As the eyes of a maid (look) unto the hand of her mistress,
So our eyes (look) unto Jehovah our God, until he be gracious unto us.

As the servants or slaves of a household are dependent on the master and mistress of the household and look to them for the supply of all their needs, so Israel which is Jehovah's household acknowledges its dependence on Him, and looks to Him to relieve its present distress. "The hand is the symbol of power, which rules the whole house" (Cheyne). This explanation is preferable to that which supposes the point of the comparison to lie in the intentness with which slaves watch for the slightest gesture of command from their master; or that which regards the hand as the hand of chastisement, and the look as the look of entreaty, appealing to the angry master to desist. With the last line cp. Is. xxx. 18.

3, 4. The plea of suffering Israel, scorned and despised by its insolent neighbours.

3. *Have mercy upon us*] **Be gracious unto us.**

for we are exceedingly filled with contempt] Contumely has been as it were the daily food with which we have been crammed to loathing. Cp. Lam. iii. 15, 30; Ps. lxxx. 5.

4. *Our soul is exceedingly filled*] The close resemblance of this clause to cxx. 6 *a* in the use of a rare form of the adverb (*rabbath*), and of the reflexive pronoun (lit. 'filled *for itself*'), may indicate that both Psalms were written by the same author.

scorning] Or, *jeers*. The cognate verb is used in Neh. ii. 19; iv. 1, "they jeered at us"..."they jeered at the Jews."

those that are at ease] Those who live in careless confident security, regardless alike of the judgements of God and the sufferings of men. Cp. Job xii. 5; Am. vi. 1; Zech. i. 15.

the proud] So the *Kĕthîbh*: according to the *Qrē* the consonants are to be read as two words, ***the proudest oppressors.***

PSALM CXXIV.

This spirited Psalm of thanksgiving was evidently written while the impression of escape from some imminent danger was still fresh in the community was still fresh. It is commonly supposed to be the thanksgiving of the returned exiles for deliverance from the Babylonian captivity. No less event, it is urged, could have evoked such strong emotion. But the language of the Psalm points rather to some sudden danger which had been providentially averted, than to a ruin which had actually fallen. Israel's enemies had threatened them: and if Jehovah had not fought for them, Israel might easily have been annihilated. But He had not suffered the wild beast to have its victim, He had broken the snare, and baulked the fowler of his prey. Such a danger menaced the restored community when Nehemiah was rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. The contempt described in Ps. cxxiii. was coupled by hostility. "When Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem went forward, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth; and they conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to cause confusion therein. But we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them." Sanballat and his allies, failing to take the Jews by surprise, apparently did not actually attack them. But for the moment the danger was serious: Nehemiah evidently felt that the community had had a narrow escape, and that if God Himself had not frustrated the plot, there would have been a fatal catastrophe. The Psalm then may best be regarded as a thanksgiving for the deliverance recorded in Neh. iv. 7—23, the whole of which passage should be studied in connection with it. Cp. also Neh. vi. 16.

Vv. 1, 2 are a double protasis, and *vv.* 3—5 a triple apodosis:—If Jehovah had not fought for us, we should have been annihilated. *Vv.* 6—8 are a thanksgiving for the deliverance, and a profession of trust.

As in Ps. cxxii, the Heb. text, with Cod. 8 of the LXX, and the Targ., reads *of David* in the title. The addition may have been suggested by phrases resembling those of Davidic Psalms, but the language points to a late date, and it can hardly be regarded even as an adaptation of an ancient poem.

A Song of degrees of David.

124 If *it had* not *been* the LORD who was on our side,
Now may Israel say;

1—5. Unless Jehovah had taken our part, we should have been destroyed by our enemies.

1. If it had not been Jehovah that was for us,
Let Israel now say.

Cp. Jacob's words in Gen. xxxi. 42; Neh. iv. 20, "our God shall

If *it had* not *been* the LORD who was on our side,
When men rose up against us:
Then they had swallowed us up quick, 3
When their wrath was kindled against us:
Then the waters had overwhelmed us, 4
The stream had gone over our soul:
Then the proud waters 5
Had gone over our soul.
Blessed *be* the LORD, 6
Who hath not given us *as* a prey to their teeth.
Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers:
The snare is broken, and we are escaped.
Our help *is* in the name of the LORD, 8
Who made heaven and earth.

ugh⁺ for us"; and Ps. xciv. 17; lvi. 9; cxviii. 6. The structure of the first two verses resembles that of cxxix. 1, 2.

2. *men*] Rather mere as contrasted with God Who was our help. Cp. lxvi. 12; lvi. 11; cxviii. 6.

rose up] Conspiring to fight against us, Neh. iv. 8. Cp. iii. 1; liv. 3.

3. Then had they swallowed us up alive, as the earth swallowed Korah (Num. xvi. 32) or as Sheol devours its victims (Prov. i. 12), or a monster its prey (Jer. li. 34). Cp. Ps. lv. 15; Lam. ii. 16.

when their wrath &c.] Cp. Neh. iv. 1; Sanballat "was wroth and exceedingly vexed," iv. 7 "they were exceedingly wroth."

4. For the figure cp. cxviii. 18, lxix. 1, 2, 15; Is. viii. 7, 8; Lam. iii. 54.

the stream] The torrent, suddenly swollen by a storm. Cp. Judg. v. 21.

had gone over our soul] Overwhelmed us and put an end to our existence.

5. *the proud waters*] Cp. the "proud waves" of the sea in Job xxxviii. 11: here the epithet is especially suitable, as suggesting the insolence of the enemy.

6—8. Thanksgiving and confidence for the future.

6. *a prey to their teeth*] For the figure cp. vii. 2.

7. The timorous defenceless bird is an apt emblem for weak helpless men. Cp. xi. 1. By 'snare' (*pach*) is probably meant a kind of clap-net. The frame breaks or the spring fails to act, so that the bird is not captured, or else escapes. See the illustration in Driver's *Joel and Amos*, p. 157.

we are escaped] *We* is emphatic. *We*, who seemed certain to become the prey of our enemies. But God "frustrated (lit. *broke*, though the word is a different one) their counsel" (Neh. iv. 15).

8. Cp. cxxi. 2.

PSALM CXXV.

The confidence of Jehovah's faithful people is unshakable, and His guardianship of them unceasing: He will not suffer them to be the victims of oppression longer than they can bear it (1—3). A prayer for the loyal-hearted, and a solemn warning of the fate of disloyal renegades, conclude the Psalm (4, 5). The Psalm may with great probability be dated a little later in Nehemiah's time than the preceding Psalm. The walls of Jerusalem, it may be supposed, have been successfully restored; Jehovah has given His people an assurance that the tyranny which had dismantled Jerusalem, and almost crushed the life out of the little community of returned exiles (see Neh. i. 3 and Ryle's note) shall not be perpetual: loyal-hearted Israelites have everything to hope; but the disloyal party, which was still endeavouring to thwart Nehemiah's efforts, and was in secret correspondence with Tobiah, will eventually meet the fate which it deserves. The whole of Neh. vi should be studied in connexion with this Psalm.

A Song of degrees.

125 They that trust in the LORD *shall be* as mount Zion,
Which cannot be removed, *but* abideth for ever.
2 *As* the mountains *are* round about Jerusalem,
So the LORD *is* round about his people

1—3. The confidence of true Israelites in Jehovah, and Jehovah's protecting care for His people.

1. Mountains in general, as the most solid part of the solid earth, were to the Israelite the symbol of all that was immovable and unchangeable (xciii. 1 &c.; Is. liv. 10). Mount Zion is here named in particular, partly because the Psalm concerns the inhabitants of Jerusalem, partly because it was so intimately connected with an irrevocable Divine purpose (Is. xiv. 32; xxviii. 16). It is the confidence of Israel, rather than its prosperity, which is as firm as the rock of Zion. No storms of trial can shake it.

shall be] Supply rather, *are*.

which *cannot be removed*] Which shall not be shaken. Cp. the metaphorical use of the word in xvi. 8; cxii. 6, 7, &c.

2. "All around Jerusalem are higher hills: on the east, the Mount of Olives; on the south, the Hill of Evil Counsel, so called, rising directly from the Vale of Hinnom; on the west the ground rises gently ...while on the north, a bend of the ridge connected with the Mount of Olives bounds the prospect at the distance of more than a mile." Robinson, *Biblical Researches*, i. 259. This girdle of mountains is an ever-present symbol to the dweller in Jerusalem of Jehovah's guardianship of His people. Cp. Zech. ii. 5, "I will be unto her a wall of fire round about."

From henceforth even for ever.
For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of 3
the righteous;
Lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.
Do good, O LORD, unto *those that be* good, 4
And to *them that are* upright in their hearts.
As for such as turn aside *unto* their crooked ways, 5
The LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of
iniquity:
But peace *shall be* upon Israel.

3. *For* &c.] We might rather have expected an inference from v. 2, *Therefore*: but the connexion of thought is that the confidence of vv. 1, 2 is justified, *for* the sceptre of wickedness *shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous*. Israel will not always be unjustly oppressed. The sceptre is the symbol of rule (Is. xiv. 5). *The lot of the righteous* is the land of promise, so called with allusion to its division by lot (Josh. xviii. 10, 11). Israel is called 'righteous' in contrast to the heathen, in virtue of its calling (Hab. i. 13; Is. xxvi. 2; i. 26). The 'sceptre of wickedness' does not refer simply to the fact that Israel was subject to Persian rule, but to the injuries done them by the Samaritans and others with the sanction of the Persian power, resulting in the disastrous condition of things which Nehemiah had found on his arrival. See Ezra iv. 23.

The A.V. and P.B.V. follow the LXX in rendering *the wicked*, but the Heb. text reads *wickedness*. The difference is one of vowel points only.

lest the righteous &c.] Prolonged oppression might tempt Israelites in despair to deny their allegiance to Jehovah and their duty to their country, and make common cause with the enemies of their religion and nation. Cp. xxxvii. 7, 8; lxxiii. 10 ff.

4, 5. A prayer for the faithful and a warning to renegades.

4. *Do good*] We are reminded of Nehemiah's prayer, v. 19; xiii. 31 *The good and the upright in their hearts* are the loyal, honest, straightforward Israelites. The variation from the usual phrase "upright of heart" emphasises their thorough sincerity.

5. But *as for such as turn aside* &c.] Renegades who forsake the straight course of duty to their God and country for tortuous courses of intrigue with enemies: the disloyal party in Jerusalem, some of whom, like Shemaiah, took bribes from Sanballat and Tobiah to entrap Nehemiah, while others kept up a treasonable correspondence with them. See Neh. vi. 12, 13, 17.

shall lead them away] To share the judgement of those whose hostility to Israel they have chosen to abet. Cp. Matt. xxv. 41.

but *peace* shall be *upon Israel*] Better as a separate sentence, a concluding prayer or benediction: Peace be upon Israel (R.V.). Cp. cxxii. 6, 7, 8; cxxviii. 6; Num. vi. 26; and Gal. vi. 16, "Peace be...

upon the Israel of God." The preceding words "as many as shall walk by this rule" suggest that St Paul may have had this passage in mind. "To these ends the Psalmist gathers up all his hopes and prayers and wishes, as it were stretching out his hands over Israel in priestly benediction. Peace is the end of tyranny, hostility, division and quiet, about peace is freedom and harmony and security and blessedness" (Delitzsch).

PSALM CXXVI.

The restoration of Israel from exile in Babylon was a marvel so astonishing that it could hardly be credited. It was the occasion for the most joyous thanksgiving, and even the heathen recognized the greatness of Jehovah's favour to His people (1—3). But the sequel had been disappointing; and the restored community had learnt to pray that Jehovah would carry on and complete the work which He had begun. Faith however could not doubt that seed sown in tears would produce a joyful harvest (4—6).

All that can be said with certainty as regards the date of the Psalm is that it belongs to the post-exilic period. It may have been written in the midst of the troubles which hindered the rebuilding of the Temple in the first twenty years after the Return. But more probably it belongs, like the preceding Psalms, to the early part of the Ezra-Nehemiah period, when the sense of failure and disappointment had sunk more deeply into the heart of the people, and the contrast between the glowing promises of the prophets and the actual condition of the weak community in Palestine had become a permanent trial of faith, while at the same time the dawn of happier days appeared to be at hand. The impression produced by vv. 1—3 is that the jubilant rejoicing of the Restoration lies in a somewhat remote past. The use of the first person plural in vv. 1—3 is no objection to this view. It does not necessarily imply that the Psalmist and his contemporaries took part in the First Return. Their vivid sense of the continuity of national life would enable Israel of the time of Ezra readily to identify itself with Israel of the time of Zerubbabel.

The elegiac rhythm of the Psalm is well marked.

The general thought of the Psalm resembles that of Ps. lxxxv, with which it should be compared and contrasted.

A Song of degrees.

126 When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion,

1—3. Israel's rejoicing at the incredible marvel of restoration to its own land.

1. *turned again the captivity of Zion*] No doubt the restoration from exile in Babylon is meant, whether the literal meaning of the phrase is *to bring back the captivity*, or *to turn the fortunes*, i.e. restore the prosperity, of Zion. See note on liii. 6; and cp. xiv. 7; lxxxv. 1;

We were like them that dream.
Then was our mouth filled *with* laughter,
And our tongue *with* singing:
Then said they among the heathen,
The LORD hath done great things for them.
The LORD hath done great things for us;
Whereof we are glad.
Turn again our captivity, O LORD,
As the streams in the south.

Hos. vi. 11; Am. ix. 14. The substantive here however differs in form from that used elsewhere, and if the variation is intentional and not merely a scribe's error, the meaning may be, *When Jehovah brought back those that returned to Zion* (R.V. marg.).

we were like them that dream] We could hardly believe that the deliverance was a reality, and not an illusion which would vanish like a dream. Cp. Is. xxix. 8; Luke xxiv. 41; Acts xii. 9.

Polybius and Livy use similar language to describe the joy and astonishment of the Greeks when, after the conquest of Macedonia by T. Quinctius Flamininus in B.C. 196, the freedom of Greece was proclaimed at the Isthmian games. "None could believe that he had really heard aright; men looked at one another in astonishment as if it was the empty illusion of a dream; distrusting the testimony of his own ears, each began to question his neighbour." Livy XXXIII. 32; cp. Pol. XVIII. 29. 7.

2. *Then was our mouth filled* with *laughter*] Cp. Job viii. 21.

singing] Or, *shouts of joy*, a word characteristic of the second Isaiah (xliv. 23; xlviii. 20; xlix. 13; li. 11; liv. 1; lv. 12). The Psalms of the Return (xciii—c) were the expression of this joy.

then said they among the nations] Even heathen nations recognised the marvel of Israel's deliverance. Cf. Is. lii. 10; Ps. xcviii. 2, &c.

hath done great things for them] Cp. Joel ii. 21, and with the preceding line cp. *v.* 17.

3. The community appropriates the words of the nations, and recalls the joy of that wonderful time: Jehovah did great things for us: we were glad.

4—6. Prayer for fuller blessing, and the expression of confident faith that efforts however feeble must bear fruit. These verses evidently imply a background of disappointed hopes and anxious struggles.

4. *Turn again our captivity*] Or, Restore our fortunes.

as the streams in the South] The *Negeb*, or 'South' country, literally 'the *dry* region,' was the arid waterless district to the south of Judah (Judg. i. 15), where in summer all the brooks dry up, and are only filled by the autumn rains. Thus far the restoration of Israel has been only as it were a scanty thread of water trickling among the stones, but as in the due season Jehovah refills those stony stream-beds with abundance of sparkling rushing water, so He can re-animate the feeble community

5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.
6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed,
Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his
sheaves *with him*.

of Israel with fresh and vigorous life, and multiply its scanty numbers into the crowds which the prophet's vision saw streaming to Jerusalem (Is. xlix. 18).

5. The efforts of the returned exiles to re-establish the nation had been carried on in the midst of hindrances and disappointments, anxieties and fears; but the Psalmist cannot doubt that they will in due time bear fruit. "So is it ever in God's kingdom. Precisely those undertakings, which at first seemed hopeless and were begun under pressing troubles, end in achieving the greatest good" (Von Gerlach, quoted by Kay). The tears shed at the Foundation of the Second Temple (Ezra iii. 12), and the rejoicings at its completion (Ezra vi. 16, 22), and at the Dedication of the Walls (Neh. xii. 27, 43) were only illustrations of the general truth. Cp. Matt. v. 4.

in joy] With shouts of joy, the same word as that for *singing* in *v.* 2. There is naturally an allusion to the rejoicings of harvest (Is. ix. 3 &c.).

6. Though one goeth weeping on his way, when he carrieth
forth the seed to sow,
He shall surely come with shouts of joy, when he carrieth
home his sheaves.

The subject in both clauses may most naturally though not necessarily be taken to be the same: at any rate the thought that "one soweth and another reapeth" (John iv. 36, 38) is not prominent here.

precious seed] This has been explained to mean 'costly' on account of the scarcity of corn, with reference to the bad seasons from which the community suffered after the Return (Haggai i. 10 f.; Ps. lxxxv. 12); but the rendering cannot be maintained. The cognate verb in Amos ix. 13 means to 'draw out' or 'trail' the seed: and the substantive here means the seed which is trailed or cast into the ground, seed for sowing.

PSALM CXXVII.

Man's labour is vain without God's blessing; and His blessing comes to those whom He loves they know not how (1, 2). A numerous family of sons is one of His special blessings: it secures for the father influence and respect (3—5). The point in the first half of the Psalm is man's dependence upon God; in the second half it is the advantage of a family: and the looseness of the connexion together with the difference of rhythm has suggested to some commentators that two originally independent Psalms have been joined together. They would hardly be shorter than Pss. cxxxiii. cxxxiv. both of which begin, like *v.* 3, with 'Behold.' The conjecture however seems to be unnecessary: in view of the importance attaching to the family in oriental countries, it is not unnatural that the Psalmist should enlarge upon its advantages, though he is led away thereby from the point with which he started.

The exhortation to trustful dependence upon God and the warning against corroding anxiety are needed in all ages: but it is not unlikely that the language of the Psalm was suggested by the circumstances of Nehemiah's time. The houses in Jerusalem needed to be rebuilt (Neh. vii. 4): let it be done in a spirit different from the irreligious selfishness of those who first returned from Babylon (Haggai i. 4). The city had to be carefully guarded (Neh. vii. 3; iv. 9 ff.): let it not be forgotten that precautions were futile without the blessing of Israel's Watchman. The population of Jerusalem was scanty (Neh. vii. 4), and the promises of the prophets (Jer. xxx. 19, 20; Zech. ii. 1 ff.; viii. 4 ff.) had not yet been fulfilled; but God could supply this need, and those to whom He granted the privilege of numerous offspring might congratulate themselves on this mark of His favour.

To the title *A song of ascents* the Heb. text, followed by Cod. R of LXX, Aq., Symm., Jer., Targ., adds of *Solomon*. The addition may have been suggested by the supposition that the *house* in *v.* 1 meant the Temple, and that *He giveth* in *v.* 2 was an allusion to Solomon's name *Jedidiah*, 'beloved of Jah' (2 Sam. xii. 25). The language of the Psalm moreover has some affinities with that of Proverbs.

The Psalm is appointed for use in the office for the Thanksgiving of Women after Child-birth.

A Song of degrees for Solomon.

Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain 127
that build it:
Except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh
but in vain.
It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, 2
To eat the bread of sorrows:

1, 2. The futility of human effort without the Divine blessing.

1. The industry of the builder, the vigilance of the watchman, are in vain without Jehovah's cooperation. A man may build a house and never live in it (Deut. xxviii. 30; Zeph. i. 13); the watchman may patrol the city, or keep his watch on the wall, but he cannot secure it from dangers such as fire or the assault of enemies. *The house* is not the Temple, nor is *the city* specifically Jerusalem: house-building and city-guarding are examples of ordinary human undertakings. But as the examples may have been suggested (see above) by the circumstances of the time, they may well have a further figurative application to those circumstances. Without the blessing of Him Who has promised to build the house of Israel (Am. ix. 11; Jer. xxxi. 28) and Who is the Watchman of His people (cxxi. 4), the most strenuous efforts of the leaders of the community can avail nothing.

the watchman] Lit. *the keeper*, as in cxxi. 4, 5.

2. Vain is it for you, O ye that rise up early and sit down late,
Eating the bread of toil.

For so he giveth his beloved sleep.

3 Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD:

Anxious toilers are addressed. 'Uprising' and 'downsitting,' as in cxxxix. 2, denote activity and rest. Men may begin their labours early, and continue them late: they may win their subsistence by a succession of unremitting labours (the word is plural), and lose all enjoyment of it through constant anxiety: but all this self-tormenting care is needless. For 'toil' cp. Prov. v. 10 (*thy labours* = the results of thy toil); Prov. x. 22 (R.V. marg.); Gen. iii. 16 (*sorrow*), 17 (R.V. *toil*).

for *so he giveth his beloved sleep*] Omit *for*. This is the natural rendering of the Heb. text, but the sense of it is not obvious. Perhaps it may be, 'Bethink yourselves! *so* even while you toil and moil with sleepless energy (Eccl. viii. 16), Jehovah gives calm rest to those whom He loves.' So Keble,

> "Still on the favoured of His eyes
> He bids sweet slumber freely wait."

Compare Mrs Browning's beautiful poem on the words.

Most commentators however adopt the rendering, *so he giveth unto his beloved* in sleep. While Jehovah's people rest in calm dependence upon Him, He gives them all for which others toil with wearying anxiety[1] (Mk. iv. 26, 27).

his beloved] The singular may be collective, *His beloved ones*, or individualising, *each of His beloved ones*. The epithet applied to Israel (lx. 5; Deut. xxxiii. 12; Jer. xi. 15) is transferred to each faithful Israelite who responds with unwavering confidence to the love which has chosen him.

It is hardly necessary to say that no sanction of idleness or depreciation of industry is here expressed or implied. What the Psalmist rebukes is the anxious spirit of those who toil restlessly as though they could ensure success by their own efforts, forgetting that God's blessing is needed to prosper those efforts, and that He is ever ready to give that blessing to those who trust Him. It is the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. vi. 25—34. Cp. 1 Pet. v. 7, Ps. xxxiii. 13 ff.; lx. 11 ff.; cxlvii. 10, 11; Prov. xxi. 31: and in particular Prov. x. 22, "The blessing of Jehovah, it maketh rich, and He addeth no toil therewith."

3—5. All blessings are God's gift, but especially the blessing of a numerous family. In dilating upon its advantages the Psalmist passes away from the primary theme of the Psalm.

3. Lo, sons are an inheritance from Jehovah;

[1] This rendering is certainly not the natural rendering of the Heb. text. Wellhausen condemns it as "quite inadmissible." It requires the supplement of an object to the verb, and שֵׁנָא must be taken as accus. of manner. If it were not for the exegetical difficulty, no one would hesitate to take 'sleep,' as the Ancient Versions take it, as the object of the verb 'giveth.' Some word however seems to be needed to correspond to the results of anxious toil, and though the Ancient Versions already had the present reading, the text may be corrupt. The anomalous form of the word for *sleep* (שֵׁנָא for יְשֵׁנָה) may point in this direction.

And the fruit of the womb *is his* reward.
As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty *man*,
So *are* children of the youth.
Happy *is* the man that hath his quiver full of them:
They shall not be ashamed,
But they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

The fruit of the womb is a reward.

As He bestowed upon Israel the possession of Canaan (Ex. xv. 17; Deut. iv. 21), not as an hereditary right, but of His own free-will, in accordance with His promise, so of His free gift and grace does He bestow the blessing of numerous children. The P.B.V. well expresses the sense, "Lo, children are the heritage of the Lord: the fruit of the womb is his reward." If the idea of recompence is included at all in 'reward,' it is, in accordance with the spirit of *vv.* 1, 2, as a recompense for the fear of God (*cp.* cxxviii) that children are given, not, as the Targum glosses, introducing the later Jewish doctrine of merit, as a reward for good works.

the fruit of the womb] A more general expression including daughters. Cp. cxxxii. 11; Gen. xxx. 2; Deut. vii. 13.

4. *children of the youth*] The sons of youth; sons born while their parents are young and vigorous (Gen. xlix. 3; contrast 'the son of his old age,' Gen. xxxvii. 3), not only as being themselves more vigorous, but because they grow up in time to be the defence and succour of their parents' old age. The figure of the arrows in the hand of the warrior was a natural one when the restoration of the state had to be carried on in face of opposition from within and from without.

5. *his quiver*] The figure of the preceding verse is continued.

they] i.e. the fathers of such numerous families.

but they shall speak &c.] Rather, when they speak with enemies in the gate. The open space by the city gate was the place where justice was administered and the citizens met for business or social intercourse (Deut. xxi. 19; Ps. lxix. 12). 'Speak' may be used in the technical sense of 'pleading a cause' (Josh. xx. 4), or in a general sense; and the meaning will be that a man with a stalwart family to support him runs no risk of being wronged by powerful enemies through the maladministration of justice, as was too commonly the case (Job v. 4, and the prophets *passim*): or that in ordinary business and intercourse he will meet with respect as a man of influence and consideration. This explanation is preferable to that which supposes the reference to be to war. In that case 'speak' must denote the 'parley' which might take place before the assault on a town. When the enemy demands the surrender of the town, it may boldly defy its assailants if it is well manned by a numerous population.

Professor Bevan suggests that the allusion may be to 'boasting-matches like the *Mufākhara* of the Arabs. Before a battle the champion of the tribe would step in front of the ranks, and proclaim to the enemy the nobility and prowess of his tribe. Even in times of peace it was a common occurrence in Arab society for poets to engage in such

rivalries, and sometimes they led to feuds and bloody tribal fights. In such contests the strength of a family would naturally form an important element. See Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, i. 51 ff.

PSALM CXXVIII.

Prosperity and domestic happiness will be the lot of him who fears Jehovah and obeys His laws (1—3). Such a man may hope to see Jerusalem prospering, and to leave a numerous posterity to succeed him (4—6).

This Psalm is a companion-piece to Ps. cxxvii. and, like it, was probably intended to encourage the members of the community of the Restoration at a time when there was much to discourage. The scanty population of Jerusalem, and the constant alarms of attack, presented a perplexing contrast to the prophetic promises of peace and plenty and a numerous population (Jer. xxx. 18 ff.; xxxi. 2–6; Zech. viii. 1—17); but the Psalm teaches that the welfare of the state depends upon virtuous family life, and virtuous family life must be founded upon active religious principle. If Israel, family by family, will fear Jehovah, it shall realise the promises of the law and the prophets. Cp. cxlv. 12—15; and for glimpses of the enjoyment of such lovely happiness from time to time in the troubled life of Israel after the Restoration see Ecclus. l. 22—24. 1 Macc. xiv. 4—15.

Luther calls this Psalm an Epithalamium or Marriage Song, and its appropriateness for use in the Marriage Service is obvious.

A Song of degrees.

128 Blessed *is* every one that feareth the LORD,
That walketh in his ways.
2 For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands:
Happy *shalt* thou *be*, and *it shall be* well with thee.
3 Thy wife *shall be* as a fruitful vine

1—3. Domestic happiness the reward of godliness.

1. *Blessed*] **Happy**, as in *v.* 2. Cp. cxii. 1; cxix. 1—3.

that walketh in his ways] In whom religious principle bears the fruit of right conduct. Cp. Prov. viii. 32; Job xxviii. 28.

2. A personal application of the general principle of *v.* 1, addressed to any God-fearing father of a family.

For thou shalt eat &c.] Or, **The labour of thine hands shalt thou surely eat.** His industry will not be baffled by bad seasons or other drawbacks, but will produce good results (Hagg. i. 11; ii. 17), and instead of their being carried off by enemies he will enjoy them himself. Cp. Is. lxv. 21, 22: and contrast the warnings of Lev. xxvi. 16; Deut. xxviii. 30 ff.; Am. v. 11; Mic. vi. 15; Job xxxi. 8.

3. *as a fruitful vine*] The fruitfulness, gracefulness, and precious-

By the sides of thine house:
Thy children like olive plants
Round about thy table.
Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth
the LORD.
The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: 5
And thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem
All the days of thy life.
Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children. 6
And peace upon Israel.

ness of the vine are obvious points of comparison: its dependence and need of support may also be alluded to.

by the side of thine house] Rather, **in the innermost chambers of thy house** (Ger. *in penetralibus domus tuæ*), to be connected with *thy wife*, as in the next line *round about thy table* obviously belongs to *thy children*. The women's apartments were at the back of the tent or house, furthest from the entrance.

thy **sons** *like olive plants*] The picture is that of the young olive trees springing up round the parent stem, fresh and full of promise. Cp. Thomson, *Land and Book*, p. 57. The evergreen olive is an emblem of vitality and vigour (lii. 8; **Jer. xi. 16**, &c.).

round about thy table] Cp. 1 Sam. xvi. 11, "We will not sit *round* till he come hither."

¶ 6. Prayers and hopes for the welfare of the community.

4. *Behold, that thus* &c.] **Lo, surely thus** &c. Cp. cxxvii. 3.

5. *The* LORD *shall bless thee*] It is possible to render thus, and to take the imperatives in the next two lines (lit. *and see thou*) as equivalent to emphatic futures (cp. Gen. xii. 2): but it is preferable to render, **Jehovah bless thee...that thou mayest see the welfare of Jerusalem ...yea, see thy sons' sons.** See Driver, *Tenses*, § 65.

out of Zion] Where He sits enthroned as King. Cp. **cxxxiv. 3; xiv. 7; xx. 2.**

6. May he live to a good old age and see his family perpetuated in his grandchildren. Cp. Prov. xvii. 6, and contrast the curse, Ps. cix. 13.

and *peace upon Israel*] Though the construction of the A.V. is possible, it is better to take these words, as in cxxv. 5, as a separate clause, **Peace be upon Israel.**

PSALM CXXIX.

Israel's chequered history supplies a ground of hope in a time of anxiety. Often as it has been oppressed by enemies, Jehovah has not suffered it to succumb entirely (1—4). And now once more the malignant foes of Zion shall perish before they have matured their plots against her (5—8).

The Psalm corresponds in length, style, and the general tenor of its contents, to Ps. cxxiv. Israel is introduced as the speaker in both ('Let Israel say'): the figure of rhetorical repetition is employed in the first two verses of both. In both Israel is face to face with [illegible] enemies, but confident of Jehovah's protection. They may well have been written by the same poet in the same period, with reference to the dangers which threatened the community in the time of Nehemiah.

A Song of degrees.

129 Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth,
May Israel now say:
2 Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth:
Yet they have not prevailed against me.
3 The plowers plowed upon my back:
They made long their furrows.
4 The LORD *is* righteous:

1—4. Throughout its history Israel has been harassed by enemies, but in His faithfulness Jehovah has preserved His people from destruction.

1. **Much have they vexed me from my youth up, let Israel now say.**

The history of Israel is often compared to the life of an individual. Israel's life began in Egypt. Cp. Hos. ii. 3, 15; xi. 1; Jer. ii. 2; &c. From the Egyptian bondage onward it has repeatedly been oppressed by enemies. For *let Israel say*, i.e. let Israel thankfully recall the lessons of its history, cp. cxviii. 2; cxxiv. 1.

2. *yet they have not prevailed against me*] Cp. 2 Cor. iv. 8—10.

3. **Plowers have plowed** *upon my back*] A bold metaphor for cruel maltreatment. Israel is imagined as thrown prostrate upon its face, while the remorseless foe drives the plough up and down over it, brutally lacerating its back. Cp. the similar figure in Is. li. 23. The use of the metaphor may have been facilitated by the common identification of the people with the land, and it may be intended to suggest the thought of the slave's back torn and furrowed by the lash (Is. l. 6). We are reminded also of Micah iii. 12, and of the story that a plough was driven over the site of the Temple by Terentius Rufus after the capture of Jerusalem by Titus, and again by Hadrian after the suppression of Bar Cocheba's revolt.

they made long their furrows] According to Delitzsch, the word means more exactly *the strip of land which is ploughed at one time*, but the meaning will be the same: they did their cruel work thoroughly and spared nothing.

4. *The LORD* is *righteous: he* &c.] Better, **Jehovah the righteous hath cut asunder.** The same attribute of righteousness which compels Him to punish (Neh. ix. 33) binds Him to deliver, for it involves faithfulness to His covenant. Cp. li. 14 note; Is. xlv. 21.

He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.

Let them all be confounded and turned back
That hate Zion.
Let them be as the grass upon the housetops,
Which withereth afore it groweth up:
Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand;
Nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.

cords.] The word usually denotes the straps or bands by which the yoke was fastened on to the neck of the ox (Job xxxix. 10). If the metaphor of the preceding verse is continued, the meaning is that the plower's harness is broken so that they can no longer continue their work. But the figure may be changed: Israel may be the ox, and the cords those which fasten the yoke of servitude upon its neck. Or 'cords' may be used generally as a figure for subjection. Cp. ii. 3. The reference is to the deliverance of Israel from successive oppressions, but especially to the great deliverance from the captivity in Babylon, and to the escape which is the theme of Ps. cxxiv.

5—8. The enemies of Zion shall be destroyed before their malicious schemes are matured.

5. Put to shame and turned backward
Shall be all that hate Zion.

It is difficult to decide whether these words are a prayer, as most Versions and commentators render them: or an expression of faith, that Israel's enemies will be foiled and repulsed in the present crisis as they were in the past. On the whole the latter explanation seems best. Cp. vi. 10. *The haters of Zion* were such as Sanballat and Tobiah, who "were grieved exceedingly" when Nehemiah came "to seek the welfare of the children of Israel" (Neh. ii. 10), and all who joined them in endeavouring to prevent the restoration of Jerusalem.

6. *as the grass upon the housetops*] Cp. Is. xxxvii. 27. Grass or corn springs up quickly on the flat roofs of oriental houses, but having no depth of soil (Matt. xiii. 5, 6) it withers prematurely away, and yields no joyous harvest.

afore it groweth up] Lit. *before it has unsheathed*, put out its flower-stalk and given promise of fruit. So let Zion's enemies perish before they can mature their plots. The rendering of P.B.V., *afore it be plucked up*, is that of some MSS of the LXX. and the Vulg. ('priusquam evellatur'), but though possible, is less suitable.

7, 8. An expansion of the simile (cp. cxxvii. 4, 5).

7. *mower*] Reaper (R.V.m.). The 'grass' includes corn springing from grains accidentally dropped on the roof.

bosom] The 'lap' or loose fold of the garment, which could be used for collecting the ears of corn. Cp. Neh. v. 13. Children were carried in it (Is. xlix. 22).

8 Neither do they which go by say,
The blessing of the LORD *be* upon you:
We bless you in the name of the LORD.

8. *The blessing of Jehovah be upon you* is the friendly greeting of the passers-by to the reapers at their work: *we bless you in the name of Jehovah* may be simply an emphatic repetition of the greeting (cp. cxviii. 26): or it may be, as the Targ. takes it, inserting *and they do not answer them*, the reapers' reply. For this kindly custom cp. Ruth ii. 4. "Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee."

The fate of Zion's enemies will be the opposite of her lot as foretold by the prophet, "Yet again shall they use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I turn their fortunes, Jehovah bless thee, O habitation of righteousness, O mountain of holiness" (Jer. xxxi. 23).

PSALM CXXX.

Israel is suffering the punishment of its sins, and humbly the Psalmist confesses that if Jehovah takes strict account of those sins, Israel's case is desperate. But Jehovah has revealed Himself as a pardoning God, in order to gain man's devotion (1—4). Therefore he can wait in patient but eager expectation, and he bids Israel wait, in confidence that the day of redemption will come at last (5—8).

Many commentators think that vv. 7, 8 stamp the Psalm as the prayer not of an individual but of the congregation: but the exhortation to the people in those verses does not necessarily imply that the speaker in vv. 1—6 is Israel personified; in fact it rather tends to distinguish the speaker from Israel. At the same time "the depths" out of which the Psalmist calls are mainly if not wholly national not personal sufferings. The sense of national guilt weighed heavily on the hearts of men like Nehemiah, whose prayer (Neh. i. 4—11) is closely akin to this Psalm, and the Psalm may best be understood as the prayer of a representative godly Israelite, such as Nehemiah.

This Psalm is earlier than the Book of Chronicles, for the Chronicler in his addition to Solomon's prayer (2 Chr. vi. 40—42) combines *vv.* 1 with cxxxii. 8, 9, 10, 10*b*, 1. It might have been written in the Exile, but more probably it belongs to the time of Nehemiah. It has noticeable points of contact with the confession in Neh. ix, as well as with Neh. i. 4—11. It should also be compared with Ps. lxxxvi.

It is one of the four Psalms which Luther called 'Pauline Psalms' (xxxii, li, cxxx, cxliii); and as one of the seven Psalms known from ancient times in the Christian Church as 'the Penitential Psalms,' it is appointed as a Proper Psalm for Ash Wednesday.

A Song of degrees.

130 Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.

1—4. A cry of penitence from the depths of trouble to the God of pardon.

1. *Out of the depths*] Deep waters are a common figure for distress

Lord, hear my voice:
Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. 2
If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities,
O Lord, who shall stand? 3
But *there is* forgiveness with thee,
That thou mayest be feared. 4

and danger. Cp. lxix. 1, 2, 14. It is not merely personal suffering that is meant, but national suffering, the burden of which the Psalmist feels intensely. Israel is in a danger of being overwhelmed by a sea of trouble.

have I called] He has long been praying and still continues to pray.

2. *let thine ears be attentive*] Cp. 2 Chron. vi. 40; vii. 15; Neh. i. 7, 11. Penitent Israel can plead for the audience which sin made impossible (Is. lix. 1, 2).

the voice &c.] Cp. xxviii. 2.

3. *If thou, Jah, shouldest mark iniquities*] Shouldest observe them and keep them in remembrance, instead of blotting them out of Thy record. Cp. lxxix. 8. The same word is used of God's 'observing' the sinner (Heb. x. 14; cp. xiv. 16, 17), and of 'keeping' anger (Jer. iii. 5; cp. Ps. ciii. 9). The P.B.V., "If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss," is one of Coverdale's boldly beautiful paraphrases.

Lord] *Adonai*, as in *v.* 2, implies that the servant is addressing his Master.

who would stand] Before Thee in judgement. No one could maintain his innocence: all must inevitably be condemned as guilty at the bar of Divine justice. Cp. i. 5; lxxvi. 7; cxliii. 2; Ezra ix. 15. This verse is virtually a confession of sin and a plea for pardon.

4. *But* there is *forgiveness with thee*] The Heb. conjunction, which literally means *for* (so P.B.V.), gives the reason for the truth implied in the preceding verse: 'Thou dost not remember iniquities, for with thee is forgiveness'; and so it may be rendered *But* or *Nay but*. The word for *forgiveness* occurs again only in Neh. ix. 17; Dan. ix. 9 (in plur.): the adj. *forgiving* in lxxxvi. 5. Cp. 1 John ii. 1, 2.

that thou mayest be feared] God forgives in order that men may fear Him. Man might dread a stern unforgiving God, but he could not fear Him with that devout reverence which is the animating spirit of Old Testament religion (Deut. v. 29), and which still finds its place in the New Testament as an element in the relation of man to God (1 Pet. i. 17). Cp. the plea for pardon in lxxix. 9. "for thy name's sake," and 1 Kings viii. 39, 40; Rom. ii. 4.

Most of the Ancient Versions misunderstood this clause, and connected it with the next verse. Thus the LXX, "For thy name's sake have I waited for thee," or according to the reading of some MSS (probably taken from Theodotion) followed by the Vulg., "For thy law's sake." Jer. "since thou art to be feared."

5 I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait,
And in his word do I hope.
6 My soul *waiteth* for the Lord
More than they that watch for the morning:
I say, more than they that watch for the morning.

7 Let Israel hope in the LORD:
For with the LORD *there is* mercy,
And with him *is* plenteous redemption.

5—8. In this [illegible] the Psalmist can wait with patience and hope, and bid Israel wait, for the redemption that will surely come.

5. *I wait... my soul doth wait ...do I hope*] The present tense of the original denotes what has been, as well as what still is, the attitude of the Psalmist's mind.

in his word] Of promise (cxix. 74, 81) to pardon and deliver: e.g. such prophecies as those in Jer. xxxi. 31—34; xxxiii. 8; &c.

6. My soul (looketh) for the Lord,
More than watchmen (look) for the morning,
(Yea, more than) watchmen for the morning (do).

More anxiously than the watchman longs for the dawn which is to release him from his duty does the devout Israelite long for the end of the night of trouble and the dawn of a happier day. The repetition of *watchmen for the morning* gives a touch of pathetic earnestness. Most commentators suppose that military sentinels are meant by *watchmen*; but the Targum renders, "My soul waits for Jehovah more than the keepers of the morning-watch which they keep in order to offer the morning sacrifice," understanding the allusion to be to the custom that one of the Levites who kept the night watch in the Temple was appointed to watch for the moment of the dawn, at which the daily sacrifice was to be offered. This explanation adds point to the comparison, for the Levites were watching with eager expectation for a dawn which would bring not merely release from toil but positive blessing, in the renewed assurance of God's covenant mercy.

The P.B.V. *more than the morning watch, I say, before the morning watch*, is derived from Münster's *ante matutinas matutinas, ante matutinas inquam, matutinas*. Coverdale's original rendering, *frō the one morninge to the other*, was taken from the Zürich Version, "von einer morgenwacht zur anderen."

7. Hope, Israel, in Jehovah,
For with Jehovah is lovingkindness.

The Psalmist exhorts the people, or if the preceding verses are taken as the words of the congregation, Israel exhorts itself, to wait in hope. Cp. cxxxi. 3.

plenteous redemption] Or *redemption in abundance*, manifold ways and means of effecting Israel's deliverance, according to the abundance of His lovingkindness and compassion. Observe how the thought that

And he shall redeem Israel
From all his iniquities. 8

God's manifold mercy and patience have not been exhausted by Israel's persistent rebellion runs through the confession in Neh. ix: see vv. 17, 19, 27, 28, 30, 31, 35. Cp. Is. xliii. 25; lv. 7.

8. HE is emphatic. He Who possesses the infinite love and wisdom and power will deliver Israel from all his iniquities, and from the calamities which are the punishment of those iniquities. Cp. xxv. 22.

PSALM CXXXI.

The Psalmist has learned the spirit of child-like humility in the school of suffering. His is not a naturally ambitious soul, but he has disciplined all worldly ambitions, and calmly and contentedly resigned himself to the Will of God.

Many commentators think that Israel is the speaker; but it is more natural to regard the Psalm as the utterance of a pious Israelite, representing the best spirit of the community at the Restoration, and renouncing on behalf of himself and those who minded all thoughts of worldly aggrandisement for Israel. The Psalm belongs in all probability to the same period as the preceding Psalm. The prophets had seemed to promise great and wonderful things for Israel in the Restoration, and what was the actual condition of Israel? Did it not demand the sternest self-discipline alike for the individual and for the community to enable them to fling away ambition, and accept with cheerful faith, the lowly, depressed position which was so different from the glowing pictures of Jeremiah and the later Isaiah? It is "a humility not natural to Israel, but born of penitence," and so the Psalm is a fitting sequel to Ps. cxxx. It is one element which this period had to contribute to the formation of the Christian character. Cp. Matt. xviii. 3; James iv. 6; 1 Pet. v. 5.

The title *of David* is found not only in the Massoretic text, but in the LXX (NAB), Aq., Symm., Syr., though wanting in some MSS of the LXX, and in the Targ. Probably it was added because the Psalm was thought to illustrate the spirit of David (see especially 2 Sam. vi. 21 f.), as there can be little doubt that the Psalm belongs to the same period as the Psalms among which it stands.

A Song of degrees of David.

LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: 131
Neither do I exercise myself in great *matters*, or in *things*
too high for me.

1. A proud mind finds expression in haughty looks and ambitious schemes. Cp. Ps. xviii. 27; ci. 5; Prov. xvi. 5.

neither &c.] Neither do I busy myself (lit. *go to and fro*) in great things, or in things too arduous for me. Cp. the warning to Baruch

2 Surely I have behaved and quieted myself,
As a child that is weaned of his mother:
My soul *is even* as a weaned child.
3 Let Israel hope in the LORD
From henceforth and for ever.

in Jer. xlv. 5, and for the word rendered *wonderful* or *artificial* cp. Gen. xviii. 14; Deut. xxx. 11. The Psalmist has schooled himself to renounce ambitious schemes which are impracticable, and to accept the *rôle* of insignificance. This appears to be the primary meaning here, rather than 'mysteries too deep for my comprehension' (Job xlii. 3). Ecclus. iii. 18 ff. is an expansion of this verse.

2. Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul:
Like a weaned child on its mother's breast,
Like a weaned child is my soul upon me.

He has *calmed* (lit. *levelled*, Is. xxviii. 25, of levelling ground for sowing) his soul, and *silenced* it (xlii. 1, 5; Lam. iii. 26). It is no longer disturbed by the storms of passion and the clamours of ambition. As the child that has gone through the troublesome process of weaning can lie happily and contentedly in its mother's arms without fretting or craving for the breast, so the Psalmist's soul, weaned from worldly ambition, can lie still without murmuring or repining. It is not the helplessness of the child—children in the East were sometimes not weaned till the age of three, 2 Macc. vii. 27, cp. note on 1 Sam. i. 23, 24—but its contentment in spite of the loss of what once seemed indispensable, that is the point of the comparison.

The same preposition which is used of the child in its mother's arms, lit. *upon its mother*, is used of the soul's relation to the Psalmist, *upon me*. The soul in Hebrew psychology was sometimes distinguished from a man's whole 'self,' and regarded as acting upon it or related to it from without. Cp. xlii. 5, 6, 11; cxiii. 3; &c. See Delitzsch, *Biblical Psychology* (E.T.) pp. 179 ff.

3. Hope, Israel, in Jehovah,
From this time forth and for evermore.

In this spirit of resignation and contentment let Israel patiently wait for the development of God's purposes. Cp. cxxx. 7.

PSALM CXXXII.

Israel had been restored from exile. The Temple had been rebuilt. Jehovah had returned to dwell in Zion according to His promise. But was His other promise of an eternal dominion to the house of David to be annulled? Was David's zeal in establishing the worship of Jehovah in Jerusalem to be forgotten? Were the prayers and hopes of that memorable occasion to be doomed to final disappointment? Surely it could not be. Such seem to have been the circumstances under which this Psalm was written, and the thoughts to which it was designed to give expression. It is a prayer of the congregation, thrown with a

singular boldness of poetic imagination into a vividly dramatic form. It consists of two main divisions, (i) the prayer of the congregation that Jehovah will remember David, (1) reciting his oath, and (2) describing the cooperation of the people with him; and (ii) the answer to the prayer.

i. (1) The congregation prays Jehovah to remember the pains which David took to prepare Him a sanctuary in Zion (1, 2); and recites his resolution in the words which he might be supposed to have used on the occasion (3—5).

(2) David's people are introduced as speakers, describing the enthusiasm with which they joined in his plan for bringing the Ark to Zion (6, 7), and praying that Jehovah will take possession of His sanctuary, and bless people, priests, and the royal house (8—10).

ii. The answer to the congregation's prayer is a recital of Jehovah's oath to David (11, 12). That oath is grounded on Jehovah's choice of Zion as His earthly abode (13). He declares His purpose to bless her people and her priests, and to restore the fortunes of the house of David (14—18).

The abruptness of the transitions has led some commentators to suggest that fragments of an older poem are incorporated in the Psalm; but the homogeneousness of its style militates against such a theory, and if once the dramatic principle of the Psalm, expressing ideas not by narrative but by the direct speech of those concerned, is grasped, the difficulties disappear.

The Psalm then is an encouragement to Israel of the Restoration to believe that Jehovah will not fail to perform His promises to the house of David. Those promises rested upon the choice of Zion as Jehovah's earthly abode. The Restoration had proved that Jehovah had not abandoned Jerusalem: it was a pledge that He would not leave His promise to David unfulfilled. The re-establishment of the worship which David founded in Jerusalem would be incomplete without the fulfilment of those promises. The Psalm is then a truly Messianic Psalm. It looks forward boldly to that fulfilment of the promises to David which was realised in Christ, and reaffirms the hope of Israel at a time when nothing but the strongest faith in the immutability of a Divine promise could have ventured to do so. Such an expression of Messianic hopes was most natural for the pilgrims going up to Jerusalem for the Feasts, and recalling all the memories connected with the "city of David."

To what period of the post-exilic period the Psalm belongs is doubtful. It is certainly earlier than Chronicles, for the Chronicler's addition to Solomon's prayer (2 Chron. vi. 40—42) is a free reproduction of **cxxx. 2, cxxxii. 8, 9, 16, 10*b*, 1**, with a reminiscence of **Is. lv. 3**. Some commentators have referred it to the age of Zerubbabel, and have even supposed that he is referred to in *v.* 10. But more probably it belongs, like most of the Psalms of Ascent, to the age of Nehemiah. It is at any rate noteworthy how strongly men's thoughts turned back to David as the originator of the Temple ritual and worship, at the time when the services of the Temple were being reorganised by Nehemiah. See **Neh. xii. 24, 36, 45, 46**.

Some have thought that the language of the Psalm implies the exist-

ence of the monarchy, and that it may have been written in the time of David or Solomon, for the Translation of the Ark or the Dedication of the Temple. But the prayer that David should be 'remembered' implies that his work lay at a distance past, and the language of the Psalm points rather to a time when the great promises to David seemed to have been forgotten. In many respects it resembles Ps. lxxxix, with which it should be carefully compared: but while the treatment is in general of the latter is exceedingly free, without any ray of hope in the immediate present. The actual humiliation of the future is still presumed: the Restoration has not yet begun. The Temple worship

Ps. cxxxii differs from the other Psalms of Degrees not only in length, but in rhythm. We miss the characteristic repetition and the elegiac measure which mark so many of them. On the other hand the introduction of different speakers, though more boldly employed here, is found in cxxiv, cxxix.

As a Messianic Psalm it is fitly appointed for use on Christmas Day.

A Song of degrees.

132 LORD, remember David,
And all his afflictions:
2 How he sware unto the LORD,
And vowed unto the mighty *God* of Jacob;

1–5. A prayer that Jehovah will remember David's zeal in bringing the Ark to Jerusalem.

1. *LORD, remember David* &c.] A possible rendering (cp. cxxxvi. 23); but better, Jehovah, remember for David all the trouble he underwent: lit. *all his being afflicted*: all the pains and trouble and anxiety he underwent in his lifetime for the cause of God, and especially in establishing a sanctuary in Jerusalem, and in making preparation for the building of the Temple. Cp. 1 Chron. xxii. 14, "Behold, *in my affliction* I have prepared for the house of Jehovah" &c. The Psalmist pleads David's services in establishing the worship of Jehovah in Jerusalem as a reason why Jehovah should remember the promises made to him. For similar pleas cp. Ps. xxxii. 13; Deut. ix. 27; Lev. xxvi. 42, 45. "The Davidic covenant was to Ezra or Nehemiah what the Abrahamic was to Moses: the focus from which the rays of Divine comfort emanated. Cp. Mic. vii. 20" (Kay). This simple and natural reference to the services of great leaders was developed in later Jewish theology into an elaborate doctrine of the merits of the fathers. See Weber, *System der altsynag. Theol.* pp. 280 ff. The form of expression is a favourite one with Nehemiah (v. 19; xiii. 14, 22, 31).

2. *How he sware*] Or, Who sware: a poetical mode of expressing the earnestness of his resolution. There is no mention of any oath or vow in the historical narrative. The fact of the translation of the Ark to Zion is recorded in 2 Sam. vi, David's desire to build a Temple in 2 Sam. vii.

the Mighty One of Jacob] Cp. *v.* 5. This title, derived from Gen.

Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house,
Nor go up into my bed;
I will not give sleep to mine eyes, 4
Or slumber to mine eyelids,
Until I find out a place for the LORD, 5
A habitation for the mighty *God* of Jacob.
Lo, we heard *of* it at Ephratah: 6
We found it in the fields of the wood.

xlix. 24, is a reminder that it was to Jehovah that David owed his victories (2 Sam. v. 12; viii. 1). It is used in Is. xlix. 26; lx. 16; cp. Is. i. 24.

3—5. David's oath not to rest till he had found a resting-place for the Ark after all its wanderings in form of course is poetical hyperbole.

3. *the tabernacle of my house...my bed*] Lit. *the tent of my house... the couch of my bed.*

4. A proverbial expression. Cp. Prov. vi. 4. The addition in P.B.V. "I will not suffer mine eyes to sleep, nor mine eyelids to slumber, *neither the temples of my head to take any rest*" comes through the Vulg. from the LXX, where it is a second rendering of the preceding words, added from the version of Theodotion.

5. *a place*] Cp. 1 Chron. xv. 1.

a habitation &c.] A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob, where His presence might 'dwell' among His people (Ex. xxv. 8, 9). The word for *dwelling place*, or *tabernacle*, is in the 'amplificative' plural, expressing the dignity of the house of Jehovah. Cp. xliii. 3; lxxxiv. 1.

6—10. The enthusiasm of Israel at the establishment of the sanctuary in Jerusalem (6, 7); their prayer that Jehovah will deign to occupy it, and will bless priests, people, and king (8—10).

6. The abruptness of the transition is at first sight perplexing; but instead of giving a prosaic account of the transportation of the Ark to Zion, the Psalmist introduces the people of David's time as speakers, proclaiming the eagerness and joy with which they welcomed David's proposal, and their resolve to worship Jehovah in His new sanctuary. The removal of the Ark was a national movement. See 2 Sam. vi. 2, 15; 1 Chron. xiii. 1 ff., xv. 28.

It may best be explained to mean *the Ark*, as the great object which the poet has in mind, though it is not actually mentioned till *v.* 8. It might mean *the tidings* or *the plan*, but this sense does not suit the verb *found*, nor is it easy to connect it with the designations of place.

But what is meant by *we heard of it* in Ephrathah, *we found it in the fields of the forest*? (1) Elsewhere *Ephrathah* is a name for *Bethlehem* (Gen. xxxv. 16, 19; xlviii. 7; Ruth iv. 11; cp. Micah v. 2; 1 Sam. xvii. 12). But the Ark never had any connexion with Bethlehem. To refer *we* to David, and to explain, 'I heard of it while I was still in my home in

7 We will go into his tabernacles:
We will worship at his footstool.
8 Arise, O LORD, into thy rest;
Thou, and the ark of thy strength.

Bethlehem,' is forced, and leaves the transition from the sing. in *vv.* 3—5 to the plural unexplained. (2) It has been thought that *Ephrathah* may mean *Ephraim*, as *Ephrathite* means *Ephraimite* (1 Sam. i. 1), and that the reference is to the sojourn of the Ark at Shiloh. 'We heard that the Ark was in Shiloh in the days of old, but when we sought it, it was no longer there, but in an obscure refuge in the fields of the forest.' (3) Delitzsch ingeniously argues that *Ephrathah* was a name for the district in which Kiriath-jearim was situated. The first-born son of Caleb's wife Ephrath was Hur (1 Chron. ii. 19), who is called 'the father' of Bethlehem (1 Chron. iv. 4). Hur's son Shobal was 'the father' of Kiriath-jearim, and his son Salma the 'father' of Bethlehem (1 Chron. ii. 50. 51). May not the district of Kiriath-jearim have been called Ephrathah, as well as that of Bethlehem? This is perhaps the best explanation; for there can be little doubt that *the fields of the forest* (*jaar*) mean the neighbourhood of Kiriath-jearim, 'the city of forests,' where the Ark had rested for many years in the house of Abinadab (1 Sam. vii. 1, 2) and still was, when David resolved to remove it to Zion (1 Chron. xiii. 5, 6). It should be noticed that the narrative in 1 Sam. vii. 1 ff. implies that the Ark was not actually in the town, but in its neighbourhood.

The suggestion that *Ephrathah* means *the fertile plains*, and *the fields of the forest* the uncultivated jungle, and that the meaning is, 'the news of David's plan spread through field and forest,' i.e. all over the country, is far-fetched and improbable

7. Let us go into his dwelling place,
Let us worship at the footstool of his feet.

This is the mutual exhortation of the Israelites to come and worship in the 'dwelling place' (*v.* 5) which David had resolved to prepare, before the Ark. Jehovah's footstool may mean His sanctuary, as in xcix. 5; but here more probably, as in 1 Chron. xxviii. 2, the Ark is meant. As He is enthroned upon the Cherubim, the Ark beneath them is His footstool. This verse anticipates, for the next verse implies that the translation of the Ark has not yet been effected.

8. The people's prayer that Jehovah will occupy the **resting-place** (1 Chron. xxviii. 2) prepared for Him; that His Presence may accompany the symbol of it. The first line is an adaptation of the watchword used when the Ark started to find a resting-place for the Israelites in their wanderings. See Num. x. 33, 35. In 2 Chron. vi. 41, 42 the words of the Psalm are quoted at the close of Solomon's prayer at the Dedication of the Temple, and some commentators suppose that in *vv.* 8 ff. the Psalmist carries us on into the Solomonic period; but it is simpler and more natural to suppose that he is still describing David's translation of the Ark to Zion.

the ark of thy strength] See 1 Sam. v. 7; vi. 19 ff.; Ps. lxxviii. 61.

Let thy priests be clothed *with* righteousness;
And let thy saints shout for joy.
For thy servant David's sake
Turn not away the face of thine anointed.

The LORD hath sworn *in* truth unto David;
He will not turn from it;
Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.
If thy children will keep my covenant

9. *Let thy priests be clothed* with *righteousness*] May those who minister in the sanctuary be worthy servants of a righteous God, fit representatives of a righteous nation (Is. xxvi. 2)! The white priestly garments were intended to be symbolical of purity of character (Rev. xix. 8). For the metaphor cp. Job xxix. 14.

let thy saints &c.] May thy chosen people worship there with jubilant rejoicing! For the meaning of *thy saints*, i.e. **thy beloved**, or **thy godly ones**, see Appendix, Note I.

10. This verse is still part of the people's prayer, though its language is coloured by the feeling of the Psalmist's own age, and expresses the perplexity of a time in which Jehovah seemed to have disowned His anointed. The people pray for a blessing on each successive king for David's sake. *Thine anointed* is not David only, but David and his successors, Jehovah's anointed king for the time being. For him the people pray that Jehovah will not 'turn away his face,' i.e. repulse his requests or banish him from His favour and presence. For the phrase cp. 1 Kings ii. 16; 2 Kings xviii. 24; Ps. lxxxiv. 9. The thought corresponds to the promise so prominent in 2 Sam. vii, that David's house should be established 'before Jehovah' (*v.* 16, read 'before *me*,' *vv.* 26, 29). Cp. Ps. lxi. 7.

11—18. Jehovah's answer to the prayer with which the Psalm begins. He will remember David, for He has chosen Zion to be His abode, and He will bless her people and her priests, and restore the power and prosperity of David's house.

11. *The LORD hath sworn* &c.] The answer to the prayer of *v.* 1 is given by recalling the promise to David which Jehovah has solemnly pledged Himself to fulfil. The narrative of 2 Sam. vii does not speak of God's promise to David as confirmed by an oath; but, as in lxxxix. 3, 35, 49, it is the poet's mode of emphasising the solemnity and immutability of the Divine promise. Cp. cx. 4; Is. xlv. 23.

in *truth*] Or perhaps, *truth*, i.e. a promise which will surely be fulfilled, *from which he will not swerve*. Cp. 2 Sam. vii. 28, "Thy words are truth."

Of the fruit &c.] The contents of the oath. Cp. 2 Sam. vii. 12.

12. *If thy* sons *will keep*] The condition of the literal fulfilment of the promise is implied in 2 Sam. vii. 14, and explicitly stated in 1 Kings viii. 25. In Ps. lxxxix. 30 ff. the thought is developed, that man's faithlessness cannot finally defeat God's purpose.

And my testimony that I shall teach them,
Their children also shall sit upon thy throne for ever
more.
13 For the LORD hath chosen Zion;
He hath desired *it* for his habitation.
14 This *is* my rest for ever:
Here will I dwell; for I have desired it.
15 I will abundantly bless her provision:
I will satisfy her poor *with* bread.
16 I will also clothe her priests with salvation:
And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.
17 There will I make the horn of David to bud:

my testimony] Or, as P.B.V., my testimonies. See p. 704.

their children &c.] Their sons also for ever shall sit upon thy throne, lit. *upon a throne for thee*, as thy representatives.

13. *For the LORD hath chosen Zion*] The permanence of the Davidic kingdom is based upon the Divine choice of Zion. Here, as in lxxviii. 67 ff., the choice of Zion is regarded as antecedent to the choice of David. To the community of the Restoration this thought must have been a comfort: they felt that Jehovah had returned to dwell in Zion, and this was a pledge to them that He would in some way fulfil His promises to the house of David. Cp. Zech. ii. 12.

14. Jehovah speaks. The expression of His Will in the facts of history is translated into the form of an utterance. Observe the stress laid on the Divine choice: in making Jerusalem the religious centre of the nation (and ultimately of the world) David was fulfilling Jehovah's purpose. This verse corresponds to the prayer of *v.* 8, as *v.* 16 to that of *v.* 9.

my rest] My resting place, as in *v.* 8. Cp. 1 Chron. xxviii. 2; Is. xi. 10; lxvi. 1.

15. *I will abundantly bless* &c.] Or, I will surely bless. The Divine blessing will rest upon people, priests (16), and rulers (17 f.). Even the poor shall not want. Cp. Deut. xv. 4. Palestine was liable to famines, and in the early days of the Restoration the community had suffered severely from scarcity (Haggai i. 6 ff.), but this was not God's Will[1].

16. Her priests also will I clothe *with salvation*] The correlative of *righteousness* in *v.* 9. He will prosper those who minister faithfully. Cp. Is. lxi. 10. *Health* in P.B.V. is an archaism for healing, deliverance, salvation. Cp. lxvii. 2.

17. *There*] In Jerusalem.

will I make the horn of David to bud] More exactly, will I make a

[1] The word for *provision* (צֵידָהּ) means also *prey*, and was rendered literally by the LXX, θηραν (ℵ^a T), but in some MSS (e.g. ℵ^a R) this was changed to χηρας *widows*, either through a scribe's mistake, or because *prey* seemed unintelligible and *widows* might naturally be classed with the *poor*. Cp. Deut. xiv. 29. Hence the Vulg. *viduam*, Douay, *her widow*.

I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.
His enemies will I clothe with shame:
But upon himself shall his crown flourish. 18

horn sprout forth for David. The figure may mean simply, that Jehovah will restore the prosperity and victorious might of the house of David (cp. lxxxix. 17, 24; Ezek. xxix. 21). The verb *sprout* however suggests a reference to the prophecies of Jer. xxiii. 5; xxxiii. 15; Zech. iii. 8; vi. 12, where *tsemach*, 'sprout,' is used as a title of the Messianic king, while in Dan. vii. 7, 8, 24; viii. 5, 'horn' is a symbol for 'king,' so that the words may be intended to have a personal reference and point to the Messianic king. Zacharias appears to have had this passage in mind, Luke i. 69; and the fifteenth of the "eighteen Benedictions" in the Jewish Liturgy incorporates it. "Cause the sprout of David thy servant to sprout forth speedily, and let his horn be exalted in Thy salvation."

17. *I have* **prepared** *a lamp for mine anointed*] The burning lamp is a natural metaphor for the preservation of the dynasty (xviii. 28; 1 Kings xi. 36; xv. 4; 2 Sam. xxi. 17). The use of the verb **prepared**, as in Ex. xxvii. 20, 21; Lev. xxiv. 2, 3, 4, suggests that there may be an allusion here to the lamp kept burning perpetually in the sanctuary. *Mine anointed* is here David himself (xviii. 50), rather than his successors.

18. *will I clothe with shame*] The opposite of *salvation*, *v.* 16. Cp. xxxv. 26; Job viii. 22.

upon himself] Upon David in the person of his representative, who is called David in Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24.

shall his crown flourish] The expression is a peculiar one. (1) The word for 'crown' (*nēzer*) used here as in lxxxix. 39, means (*a*) 'consecration,' (*b*) 'a crown' or 'diadem,' as the mark of consecration to an office. It is used not only of a king's crown, but of the high-priest's diadem (Ex. xxix. 6). (2) The verb *yātsīts*, 'flourish,' or rather 'sparkle,' 'glitter,' is cognate to the word *tsīts*, which denotes the glittering plate of gold bearing the inscription "Holiness to Jehovah" which the High-priest wore on his turban, and which is called in Ex. xxix. 30, "the plate of the holy diadem." This phraseology seems intended to suggest that David's representative will have high-priestly as well as royal dignity. Cp. Jer. xxx. 21; Zech. vi. 11—13.

PSALM CXXXIII.

This Psalm is commonly supposed to describe the blessings which flowed from the meeting of the Israelites at Jerusalem at the great religious festivals. Such meetings were a consecration of the whole nation; they diffused a spirit of brotherly harmony throughout it; they sustained and quickened the national life by bringing individuals into fellowship with Jehovah and with one another at the religious centre of His choice. Attractive as this view is, and natural as it may have been to apply the Psalm to these gatherings, it is questionable whether

it was the sight of them which inspired the poet. "Dwelling together" implies more than a temporary sojourn for a few days; and it seems preferable to connect the Psalm with Nehemiah's efforts to repeople Jerusalem (Neh. xi. 1 ff.). It presents an ideal to be aimed at. Old animosities are to be laid aside. Brethren are to dwell together as brethren should do. A strong and united metropolis, at once the religious and political centre of the country, will consolidate and invigorate the whole nation, and spread blessing through the body of which it is the head.

If the title *of David* could be regarded as authentic, the Psalm might refer to the reunion of the nation after the civil disorders of the early years of his reign. It is however wanting in the Targum, and in some MSS of the LXX and of Jerome, and the language of the Psalm points to a post-exilic date for this as for the other Psalms of Ascent.

A Song of degrees of David.

133 Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is*
For brethren to dwell together in unity.
2 *It is* like the precious ointment upon the head,
That ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron's beard:
That went down to the skirts of his garments;

1. *Behold* &c.] The Psalmist seems to have before his eyes some instance of the blessing and the beauty of brotherly concord which prompts his song. May it not have been the enthusiasm of those who volunteered to dwell in Jerusalem, when Nehemiah was restoring its civic and religious organisation (Neh. xi. 2)?

for brethren to dwell together in unity] Lit. *the dwelling of brethren also together*: i.e. that the tie of intimate relationship denoted by the name of *brethren* should find outward expression in the gathering of Israelites to make their home in the mother-city, or, if the reference of the Psalm is to the great Feasts, in the reunions of the members of the nation at these periodical gatherings. By *brethren* he does not mean the members of a single family, but the members of the larger family of Israel, the whole nation. *In unity* is doubtless a correct interpretation of the Psalmist's meaning, though it goes beyond the strict sense of the Heb. word, which only means *together*.

2. **It is like the goodly oil upon the head descending upon the beard, even Aaron's beard,**
Which descendeth upon the collar of his garments.

Oil was a symbol of joy and festivity (Ps. xlv. 7), but it is not common oil that is mentioned here. The brotherly concord of the dwellers in Jerusalem is compared to the sacred oil with which the High-priest was anointed (Ex. xxx. 23 ff.). This sacred oil was *poured* upon Aaron's head (Ex. xxix. 7; Lev. viii. 12; xxi. 10) when he was consecrated to the office of high-priest, whereas the ordinary priests were only sprinkled with it (Ex. xxix. 21). It would flow down upon his beard and on to his shoulders and his breast, upon which he bore the names

As the dew of Hermon, *and as the dew* that descended 3
upon the mountains of Zion:
For there the LORD commanded the blessing,

of the Twelve Tribes (Ex. xxviii. 9—12, 17—21), symbolising thereby the consecration of the whole nation of which he was the representative. The stream of perfumed oil, carefully compounded with aromatic spices, would diffuse its fragrance all around, symbolising the holy influence which should emanate from the chief religious representative of Israel, and from the nation which he represented. The point of the simile then seems to be, that as the sacred oil flowed down over Aaron's shoulders, so the harmonious unity of those who dwell in Jerusalem will influence the whole nation for good. The same spirit will be diffused throughout the whole community. Cp. Ps. cxxii.

Aaron might denote any high-priest; but the Psalmist by the use of the present participles seems rather to intend to recall the scene of the consecration of Aaron himself (Lev. viii). It might have been thought that he was alluding to some recent ceremony; but according to Jewish tradition, the sacred oil was wanting in the time of the Second Temple, and the high-priest was consecrated by investiture with the pontifical robes only.

It is a question whether the clause *which descendeth upon the collar of his garments* refers to the oil or to Aaron's beard. The Massoretic accentuation (unless it is to be regarded as rhythmical and not syntactical) makes it refer to Aaron's beard: the Ancient Versions take it to refer to the oil. In the former case the beard is thought of as connecting the head and the garments; but the latter interpretation is the more natural, and is supported by the fondness of the Psalms of Ascent for the repetition of words.

The collar not *the skirts* of the high-priest's garment is denoted by the Heb. word, which means literally 'mouth' or 'opening,' i.e. the hole through which the head passed, or its bordering. Cp. Ex. xxviii. 32; xxxix. 23; Job xxx. 18.

3. Like dew of Hermon, which descendeth *upon the mountains of Zion*] There is no justification for inserting the words *and as the dew*, as in A.V. "The dews of Syrian nights are excessive; on many mornings it looks as if there had been heavy rain" (G. A. Smith, *Hist. Geogr.* p. 65); and the dew that falls on the slopes of the snow-clad Hermon is particularly copious. Dew is a symbol for what is refreshing, quickening, invigorating; and the Psalmist compares the influence of brotherly unity upon the nation to the effect of the dew upon vegetation. From such dwelling together individuals draw fresh energy; the life of the community, social and religious, is revived and quickened. It need not be supposed that the poet imagined that the dew which fell upon the mountains of Zion was in any way physically due to the influence of Mount Hermon (though it is possible that it was popularly supposed that there was some connexion); all he means is that the life-giving effect of harmonious unity upon the nation is as though the most abundant dews fell upon the dry mountain of Zion.

for there &c.] In Jerusalem. Cp. cxxxii. 17. Jehovah has connected

Even life for evermore.

the blessing of a vigorous national life with the religious centre of His choice.

life for evermore] Cp. Eccles. xxxvii. 25, "The days of Israel are innumerable." But perhaps *for evermore* should be connected with *commanded*. For *life* cp. xxxvi. 9.

PSALM CXXXIV.

This Psalm consists of a call (1, 2) and a response (3). The call appears to be addressed by the worshippers in the Temple to the priests and Levites whose duty it was to render the nightly service of praise to Jehovah, and their leader responds to it with a priestly blessing. The Psalm forms a fit conclusion to the collection of Pilgrim-Songs. It may have been composed after the restoration of the Temple-services by Nehemiah (Neh. xii. 44—47). "The people," we read there, "rejoiced over the priests and the Levites that waited," lit. *stood*, i.e. took their part in ministering, as in *v.* 1. But there is no definite indication of date or occasion.

A Song of degrees.

134 Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD,
Which by night stand in the house of the LORD.
2 Lift up your hands *in* the sanctuary,
And bless the LORD.
3 The LORD that made heaven and earth
Bless thee out of Zion.

1. *all ye servants of the* LORD] Not Israelite worshippers in general, but, as the following clause shews, ministrants in the Temple.

which by night stand in the house of the LORD] 'To stand before Jehovah' was the regular term for priestly or Levitical ministration. Cp. Deut. x. 8 &c.; Heb. x. 11.

The words imply that services of praise and thanksgiving were held in the Temple at night; possibly a reference to such services is to be found in 1 Chron. ix. 33.

The addition *even in the courts of the house of our God* in the P.B.V. is derived through the Vulg. from the LXX, and comes from cxxxv. 2.

2. *Lift up your hands*] The gesture of prayer. Cp. xxviii. 2; 1 Tim. ii. 8.

in *the sanctuary*] Rather to *the sanctuary*, towards the most holy place, as the earthly dwelling-place of Jehovah. The rendering of R.V. marg., *in holiness*, is less probable.

3. The response of the priests,

Jehovah bless thee out of Zion,
Even the maker of heaven and earth.

The first line is taken from the priestly blessing in Num. vi. 24, with the addition of *out of Zion* (cxxviii. 5). The singular *thee* may denote the congregation as a whole or each individual in it. The attribute *Maker of heaven and earth* implies Jehovah's power to bless. Cp. cxv. 15, note.

PSALM CXXXV.

This Psalm was obviously intended for use in the worship of the Second Temple. It begins with a call to those who minister there to praise Jehovah, Who has chosen Israel to be His peculiar people (1—4). His omnipotence is manifested in Nature (5—7), and in History (8—12). He will not forsake His people, whereas the idols of the heathen are nought, and cannot save their worshippers (13—18). Let all Israel unite in praising this glorious God (19—21).

Though the Psalm is little more than a mosaic of fragments and reminiscences from Law, Prophets, and other Psalms, it possesses real vigour of rhythm and spirit. It is an expansion of Ps. cxxxiv, and it should be compared with the blessing of the Levites in Neh. ix. 4 ff., though there the whole course of Israel's history is reviewed at length.

Praise ye the LORD. 135
Praise ye the name of the LORD;
Praise *him*, O ye servants of the LORD.
Ye that stand in the house of the LORD, 2
In the courts of the house of our God,
Praise the LORD; for the LORD *is* good: 3
Sing *praises* unto his name; for *it is* pleasant.
For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, 4
And Israel for his peculiar treasure.
For I know that the LORD *is* great, 5

1—4. A call to Jehovah's servants to praise Him, since he has chosen Israel to be His own people.

1. *Praise ye the LORD*] Heb. Hallelujah. The verse is identical with cxiii. 1, except that the clauses are transposed.

2. *Ye that stand* &c.] As in cxxxiv. 1, those who minister in the Temple and its precincts are summoned to praise. It is less natural to suppose that the first line refers to the priests and Levites, and the second line (*ye that stand* being supplied) to the worshippers in the outer court.

3. *for* it is *pleasant*] Either 'His name is lovely,' or 'it is pleasant to sing praise.' Cp. cxlvii. 1.

4. *the LORD*] Heb. Jah. The verse is based upon Deut. vii. 6; cp. Ex. xix. 5.

5—7. Jehovah's greatness and sovereignty exhibited in Nature.

5. *For I know*] A further reason for praising Jehovah. *I* is

And *that* our Lord *is* above all gods.
6 Whatsoever the LORD pleased,
That did he in heaven, and in earth,
In the seas, and all deep places.
7 He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth,
He maketh lightnings for the rain;
He bringeth the wind out of his treasuries.
8 Who smote the firstborn of Egypt,
Both of man and beast.
9 *Who* sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt,
Upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.
10 Who smote great nations,
And slew mighty kings;
11 Sihon king of the Amorites,
And Og king of Bashan,
And all the kingdoms of Canaan:

emphatic. Though the nations are ignorant of it, Israel in whose name the Psalmist speaks, knows the supreme greatness of Jehovah.

above all gods] It is clear from vv. 15 ff. that the Psalmist does not intend by this comparison to imply that the gods of the heathen have any real existence.

6. **Whatsoever Jehovah pleased hath he done,**
In heaven, and in earth, in the seas and all deeps.

The first line is identical with cxv. 3*b*: the second is based on Ex. xx. 4. The *deeps* are "the waters under the earth," the subterranean abyss of waters on which the earth was thought to rest. Cp. xxiv. 2; cxxxvi. 6.

7. Taken almost verbatim from Jer. x. 13 (=li. 16), where the words occur in a similar context, contrasting Jehovah with idols.

from the ends of the earth] From the most remote quarters; so that "thou knowest not whence they arise" (S. Aug.); or from the horizon, where they seem to rise as they come into view. Cp. 1 Kings xviii. 44.

for the rain] Along with the rain.

his treasuries] Cp. xxxiii. 7; Job xxxviii. 22.

8—12. Jehovah's sovereignty exhibited in the deliverance of His people from Egypt and their establishment in the land of Canaan.

9. Who *sent tokens*] **He sent signs.**

10. *great nations*] Or, many nations. Cp. Deut. vii. 1.

11. Sihon and Og, "the two kings of the Amorites," are mentioned as the first and some of the most formidable enemies whom the Israelites met. See Num. xxi. 21 ff., 33 ff.; Deut. ii. 30 ff., iii. 1 ff.; and cp. Am. ii. 9.

kingdoms] Cp. Deut. iii. 21; Josh. xii. 7—24.

And gave their land *for* an heritage, 12
An heritage unto Israel his people.
Thy name, O LORD, *endureth* for ever; 13
And thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations.
For the LORD will judge his people, 14
And he will repent himself concerning his servants.

The idols of the heathen *are* silver and gold, 15
The work of men's hands.
They have mouths, but they speak not; 16
Eyes have they, but they see not;
They have ears, but they hear not; 17
Neither is there *any* breath in their mouths.
They that make them are like unto them: 18
So is every one that trusteth in them.

Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: 19
Bless the LORD, O house of Aaron:
Bless the LORD, O house of Levi: 20
Ye that fear the LORD, bless the LORD.
Blessed *be* the LORD out of Zion, which dwelleth *at* 21
Jerusalem.

12. *an heritage*] Cp. Deut. iv. 38.

13—18. Jehovah is eternally the same, and will not forget His people; whereas the impotent gods of the heathen cannot protect their worshippers.

13. Cp. Ex. iii. 15; Ps. xxx. 4; cii. 12. Jehovah's Name is called His *memorial*, as bringing to mind all that He is and does. Such as He has once revealed Himself to be He will continue for ever. Cp. Heb. xiii. 8.

14. Taken verbatim from Deut. xxxii. 36; cp. Ps. xc. 13. In virtue of His relation to Israel He will do them justice, and not finally abandon them.

15—18. Taken with some alterations from cxv. 4—8. The nonentity of the heathen gods is contrasted with the sovereignty of Jehovah.

18. **Like unto them shall their makers become,**
Even everyone that trusteth in them.

19—21. **All Israel is summoned to praise Jehovah.**

19, 20. The three-fold call of cxv. 9—11; cxviii. 2—4 is here expanded by the addition of the house of Levi.

21. *Blessed* be Jehovah *out of Zion*] This final adoration corresponds to the prayer with which Ps. cxxxiv concludes. From Zion, which is

Praise ye the LORD.

His earthly dwelling-place, Jehovah's blessing goes forth upon His people: from Zion where they meet to worship, must ring out His people's answer of adoring praise.

Praise ye the LORD] Hallelujah; omitted by the LXX.

PSALM CXXXVI.

Another liturgical Psalm, closely resembling Ps. cxxxv, but distinguished by the refrain which forms the second half of each verse. This refrain was evidently sung as a response, either by a choir of priests and Levites answering the choir or the singer who chanted the first line; or by the whole congregation. We read that at the laying of the foundation stone of the Second Temple the priests and Levites "answered one another in praising and giving thanks to Jehovah, saying, For he is good, for his lovingkindness endureth for ever toward Israel" (Ezra iii. 11; cp. 2 Chron. vii. 3, 6); and an analogy for the congregational response may be found in the statement that on certain occasions the people answered with *Amen*, or *Amen, Hallelujah* (cvi. 48, note; Deut. xxvii. 15; Neh. v. 13; viii. 6).

This Psalm was known in the liturgical language of the Jews as "the Great Hallel" ("the Hallel" being Pss. cxiii—cxviii); but the term was also applied to Ps. cxxxv. 4—cxxxvi. and to the whole group cxx—cxxxvi (Delitzsch).

The Psalm is arranged in well marked groups of three verses to the end of *v.* 18, after which follow two groups of four verses: but as *vv.* 17—22 are taken from Ps. cxxxv, and *v.* 25 is in no obvious connexion with the context, it may be questioned whether the text is in order. Some forms of the LXX, as represented by the Old Latin in the Gallican Psalter, repeated *v.* 3 at the end, and the P.B.V. retains the addition.

The Hebrew text of the Book of Ecclesiasticus contains a hymn of thanksgiving which is an obvious imitation of this Psalm, and is largely composed of phrases taken from Psalms in Book v, particularly cxxi, cxxxii, cxlvii, cxlviii.

It follows ch. li. 12, "Therefore I give thanks and will praise, and will bless the name of Jehovah," and runs thus (the refrain being omitted for brevity):

1. O give thanks unto Jehovah for he is good: for his lovingkindness (endureth) for ever (cxxxvi. 1).
2. O give thanks unto the God of praises (xxii. 3), for &c.
3. O give thanks unto the keeper of Israel (cxxi. 4), for &c.
4. O give thanks unto the former of all things (Jer. x. 16), for &c.
5. O give thanks unto the redeemer of Israel (Is. xlix. 7), for &c.
6. O give thanks unto him that gathereth the outcasts of Israel (Ps. cxlvii. 2*b*; cp. Is. xi. 12, lvi. 8), for &c.

7. O give thanks unto him that buildeth his city and his sanctuary (Ps. cxlvii. 2 *a*), for &c.

8. O give thanks unto him that maketh a horn to sprout for the house of David (Ps. cxxxii. 17), for &c.

9. O give thanks unto him that chooseth the sons of Zadok to be priests (cp. Ezek. xl. 46), for &c.

10. O give thanks unto the Shield of Abraham (Gen. xv. 1), for &c.

11. O give thanks unto the Rock of Isaac, for &c.

12. O give thanks unto the Mighty One of Jacob (Ps. cxxxii. 2, 5), for &c.

13. O give thanks unto him that hath chosen Zion (Ps. cxxxii. 13), for &c.

14. O give thanks unto the King of the kings of kings, for &c.

15. And he hath lifted up a horn for his people, a praise for all his beloved, even the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Hallelujah. (cxlviii. 14).

If this hymn was composed by Ben Sira, it proves that he was familiar with Psalms, some of which have been regarded as among the latest in the Psalter, and it affords a strong presumption that the Psalter was complete before B.C. 180. The hymn, it is true, is not found in the Versions, but Dr Schechter thinks that its authenticity is established, and that its omission is accounted for, by the prominence which it gives to the house of Zadok. It was natural for Ben Sira, who knew that family in its best representative, Simon the Just, to give thanks for its election to the priesthood: it was equally natural for his grandson the translator to omit such a thanksgiving, when the high-priests of the house of Zadok had disgraced their calling, and the house of Zadok had been superseded by the Maccabaean line. See Schechter and Taylor's *Wisdom of Ben Sira* (1899), p. 35.

O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good: 136
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
O give thanks unto the God of gods: a
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
O give thanks to the Lord of lords: 3
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
To him who alone doeth great wonders: 4
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

1—3. A call to thanksgiving.

1. Cp. cvi. 1, note; cvii. 1; cxviii. 1.

his mercy] His lovingkindness, and so throughout the Ps.

2, 3. *the God of gods...the Lord of lords*] From Deut. x. 17.

4—9. Jehovah the Creator.

4. Cp. lxxii. 18; lxxxvi. 10.

5 To him that by wisdom made the heavens:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
6 To him that stretched out the earth above the waters:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
7 To him that made great lights:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
8 The sun to rule by day:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
9 The moon and stars to rule by night:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
10 To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
11 And brought out Israel from among them:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
12 With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
13 To him which divided the Red sea into parts:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
14 And made Israel to pass through the midst of it:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
15 But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
16 To him which led his people through the wilderness:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
17 To him which smote great kings:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
18 And slew famous kings:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
19 Sihon king of the Amorites:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:

5. *by wisdom*] By understanding, as Prov. iii. 19; Jer. x. 12.
6. *that* spread forth *the earth* upon *the waters*] Cp. cxxxv. 6, note; Is. xlii. 5; xliv. 24; Ps. xxiv. 2.
7—9. Cp. Gen. i. 14—16.

10—15. Jehovah the Deliverer of Israel. Cp. cxxxv. 8 ff.
12. From Deut. iv. 34, &c.; cp. Ex. vi. 1, 6.
13. *into parts*] R.V. in sunder. *In two parts* of P.B.V. is a printer's error. The Great Bible of 1539 has *into partes*.
15. *overthrew*] Lit. *shook off*, as Ex. xiv. 27.

16—22. Jehovah the Giver of the promised land. Cp. cxxxv. 10 ff.
16. Cp. Deut. viii. 15.

And Og the king of Bashan: 20
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
And gave their land for an heritage: 21
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
Even an heritage unto Israel his servant: 22
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
Who remembered us in our low estate: 23
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
And hath redeemed us from our enemies: 24
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
Who giveth food to all flesh: 25
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
O give thanks unto the God of heaven: 26
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

22. *Israel his servant*] Cp. Is. xli. 8; &c.

23—26. Jehovah the Deliverer of Israel and the Supporter of all things living.

23. *in our low estate*] The humiliation of the Exile.

24. *And hath redeemed* &c.] R.V. and hath delivered us from our adversaries.

25. Cp. civ. 27 f.; cxiv. 15; cxlvii. 9. *All flesh* includes all living things. Cp. Gen. vi. 13. The mention of the universal Providence of God follows somewhat abruptly on the celebration of His care for Israel, and it is possible that there has been some corruption or dislocation of the text.

26. *the God of heaven*] A late title, occurring here only in the Psalter. It is found in Ezra i. 2, &c.; Neh. i. 4; ii. 4; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 23; Jonah i. 9; Daniel ii. 18, &c. Cp. Apoc. xi. 13; xvi. 11.

The P.B.V. adds "O give thanks unto the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever." This repetition of *v.* 3 is taken from the Gallican Psalter, but is not found in any extant MS of the LXX.

PSALM CXXXVII.

Israel's minstrels were silent in the land of exile, when they were tauntingly bidden to display their skill for the amusement of their captors (1—3). How could they sing Jehovah's songs in a heathen land? how forget Jerusalem (4—6)? Perish the enemies that had wrought her ruin and rejoiced at her fall (7—9)!

The tender pathos of the opening verses enlists our sympathy; the crash of bitter denunciation in the closing stanza shocks and repels. But implacable hatred of Zion's foes was in those days the inevitable correlative to intense love for her. The new law, "Thou shalt love thine enemy," had not yet taken the place of the old maxim, "Thou

shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy." The law of stern retribution for cruel wrong seems to the Psalmist only just, and the peculiarly barbarous form in which he expresses his desire for the extermination of the destroyer of his country is only such as was familiar to his age.

The Psalm is generally thought to have been written soon after the Return from Babylon in B.C. 537, while Babylon, though it had lost its independence, still enjoyed a large measure of prosperity under the mild rule of Cyrus. The past tenses of *vv.* 1—3 seem to imply that the writer and his companions are no longer in exile, while from *vv.* 7—9 it appears that the wrongs of Israel have not yet been fully avenged on Babylon.

A date before the close of the Exile is not indeed impossible. At first sight *vv.* 4—6 read like the words of those who are still in exile; *vv.* 7—9 seem to anticipate a judgement still wholly future; the tenses in *vv.* 1—3 might be taken as perfects ('have we sat down' &c.), describing a state of things still existing; and the denunciation of Babylon in Jer. li, which probably belongs to the closing years of the Exile (Driver, *Lit. of O. T.*[6], p. 265), breathes a very similar spirit to that of the Psalm.

These reasons, however, are not conclusive. *Vv.* 4—6 can be understood as dramatically expressing the feelings of the exiles in the actual words which they might have used at the time; Babylon was not destroyed by Cyrus, and its capture must have seemed a very imperfect measure of retribution: *there* in *vv.* 1, 3 points decidedly to Babylon from a distance; and a date immediately after the return from Babylon is the most probable. The first sight of the ruins of the city and Temple might well have moved the Psalmist to recall his faithfulness to Zion in the distant land of exile, and to give utterance to his longing for vengeance upon those who had wrought this havoc and rejoiced at the sight of it. The author may have been a Levite, who had taken part or looked forward to taking part in the Temple music, and returned in extreme old age to Jerusalem: one possibly of those whose regrets for past glories overwhelmed them at the laying of the foundation of the Temple (Ezra iii. 12).

That the Psalm is, as Professor Cheyne thinks (*Origin of the Psalter*, p. 69 f.), "a dramatic lyric," written in the time of Simon the Maccabee, four hundred years after the Return, is in the highest degree unlikely.

The title in the LXX, τῷ Δαυὶδ Ἰερεμίου or διὰ Ι. ('*Of David; Jeremiah's*, or '*by Jeremiah*'), appears to represent two views as to its origin. In style it may have been thought to resemble Davidic Psalms, and in tone the writings of Jeremiah; but as Jeremiah never was in Babylon the ascription of the Psalm to him is out of the question.

137 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept,

1—3. The silence of sacred song in the sorrow of exile.

1. *the rivers of Babylon*] Not only the Euphrates and its tributaries,

When we remembered Zion.
We hanged our harps
Upon the willows in the midst thereof.
For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song;
And they that wasted us *required of us* mirth,
Saying, Sing us *one* of the songs of Zion.
How shall we sing the LORD'S song
In a strange land?

such as the Chebar (Ezek. i. 1; iii. 15), but the numerous canals with which the country was intersected. Babylonia was characteristically a land of streams, as Palestine was a land of hills; it was the feature of the country which would impress itself upon the mind of the exiles. Cp. Jer. li. 13. They may have resorted to the banks of the rivers and canals to mourn; partly for the sake of the shade of the trees which grew there, partly because such places were suitable to melancholy meditation.

It is hardly likely that there is any reference to places of prayer chosen near water for the sake of ceremonial lustrations (Acts xvi. 13).

sat down] As mourners. Cp. Is. xlvii. 1, 5.

Zion] The name is chosen specially to suggest the sacred memories of the city.

2. Upon the willows in the midst thereof,
We hung our harps.

the willows] Cp. Is. xliv. 4. The tree meant, however, was probably not the weeping willow, but the *populus Euphratica*.

3. *For there* &c.] The reason why their harps were silent. It might have been expected that they would soothe their sorrow with plaintive music; but the heartless demand of their captors made it impossible.

asked *of us* **songs**] Lit. *words of song*.

they that wasted us] The exact meaning is doubtful. The A.V. marg. 'Heb. *laid us on heaps*' rests on an impossible derivation, and the R.V. marg. *our tormentors* on an improbable one. Perhaps with the change of a single letter *shōlelēnu*, 'our spoilers,' should be read instead of the obscure *tōlālēnu*.

Coverdale's rendering in the P.B.V., *and melody in our heaviness*, comes from Luther, 'und in unserm Heulen ein fröhlich Gesang.'

one *of the songs of Zion*] Or, some *of the songs*. As these songs are called in the next verse *Jehovah's songs*, it is clear that it is not secular songs that are meant, but the sacred hymns of the Temple worship (2 Chron. xxix. 27). To sing these for the amusement of their conquerors would have been the grossest profanation of all that they held most dear; an act comparable to Belshazzar's use of the consecrated vessels at his feast (Dan. v. 2). Cp. Matt. vii. 6.

4—6. The exiles indignantly repudiate the idea of doing what would

5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget *her cunning.*
6 If I do not remember thee,
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth;
If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.
7 Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom *in* the day of Jerusalem;
Who said, Rase *it*, rase *it*, *even* to the foundation thereof.
8 O daughter of Babylon, who art *to be* destroyed;

be treason to the memories of Zion. The protest is dramatically expressed in the words which they would have used at the time.

5. *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem*] To have consented would have seemed an act of unfaithfulness to Zion. Some of the exiles did forget the "holy mountain" (Is. lxv. 11). For the imprecation as a solemn asseveration cp. Job xxxi. 21, 22.

forget her cunning] So the aposiopesis is admirably completed in the Great Bible of 1540. Less forcibly the LXX and Jer. read the verb as a passive, 'Let my right hand be forgotten,' which is the rendering of Coverdale (1535), retained in the first edition of the Great Bible.

6. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,
If I remember thee not (R.V.).

Let all power of speech and song desert me. Cp. Job xxix. 10.

if I prefer not &c.] Lit. *if I exalt not Jerusalem above my chiefest joy*: i.e. if I do not regard J. as dearer to me than aught else.

7—9. The Psalmist's love for Jerusalem leads him to invoke vengeance on her enemies: upon Edom for the unbrotherly spite which rejoiced at her destruction; upon Babylon, for having accomplished that destruction

7. Remember, Jehovah, against the children of Edom the day of Jerusalem] Remember and punish the conduct of the Edomites in the fatal day of Jerusalem's fall. For this sense of 'remember' cp. Neh. vi. 14; xiii. 29; and for 'day' cp. Ob. 12; Ps. xxxvii. 13. The hostility of the Edomites to Israel was of long standing, and it was aggravated by the fact of their relationship through their descent from Esau and Jacob They are repeatedly denounced for it by the prophets, and threatened with vengeance. See Amos i. 11; Obad. 10 ff.; Joel iii. 19; Jer. xlix. 7 ff.; Lam. iv. 21 f.; Ezek. xxv. 12 ff.; xxxv. 2 ff.; Is. xxxiv; lxiii. 1 ff. *Rase* it] Lit. *lay (it) bare.*

8. *O daughter of Babylon*] The city of Babylon personified.

who art to be *destroyed*] The most obvious translation is that of R.V. marg., **that art laid waste.** So Aq. and Jerome, *vastata.* But the following clauses apparently imply that Babylon has not been destroyed, and the participle may be 'prophetic,' *that art doomed to be laid waste*[1].

[1] Coverdale and the Great Bible of 1539 have, *thou shalt come to misery thy self,*

Happy *shall he be*, that rewardeth thee
As thou hast served us.
Happy *shall he be* that taketh
And dasheth thy little ones against the stones. 9

Delitzsch quotes examples of a similar idiom in Arabic. 'The stricken one,' = 'one who is doomed to be stricken.' So Theodotion, ἡ διαρπασθησομένη. Some of the Ancient Versions, however (Symm., Syr., Targ.), render *thou waster*, a rendering which only requires a slight change of the text, and is adopted by many critics.

9. The barbarous customs of Oriental warfare spared neither women nor children in a war of extermination. Cp. Is. xiii. 16; Hos. x. 14; xiii. 16; Nah. iii. 10; 2 Kings viii. 12; Hom. *Il.* XXII. 63. The stern law of retaliation demanded that Babylon should be treated as she had treated Jerusalem. Cp. Is. xlvii. 1—9; Jer. li. 24, 56.

the stones] The rock or crag.

PSALM CXXXVIII.

This Psalm may best be understood as an expression of the gratitude and confidence of Israel after the Return from the Captivity. Speaking in the name of the people the Psalmist praises Jehovah before all the world for the fulfilment of His promises (1—3); anticipates the impression which the manifestation of His glory will make upon heathen nations (4—6); and looks forward to the completion of His purposes for His people, in spite of further troubles that may await them (7, 8).

To the Hebrew title 'A Psalm *of David*' some MSS of the Septuagint add *of Haggai and Zechariah*, or *of Zachariah*, possibly preserving a tradition that the Psalm belonged to the period of the Restoration, or suggesting that it fitly expressed the feelings of that period.

The tone and language of *vv.* 4—7 resemble cii. 15 ff., and many passages in Is. xl—lxvi where the hope of the conversion of the nations is connected with the Restoration of Israel from exile.

A Psalm of David.

I will praise thee with my whole heart: 138

1—3. Thanksgiving for Jehovah's manifestation of His lovingkindness and truth in the fulfilment of His promises.

1. I will give thanks unto thee *with my whole heart*] Cp. ix. 1. There is no need for the Psalmist to mention the name of Him Whom he addresses. The Ancient Versions, however, insert *O Lord*, after *thee*, and the P.B.V. follows them.

from Zürich Bible, *und du Babel, wirst auch ellend werden*. The P.B.V. *wasted with misery*, from the Great Bible of 1540, may have been suggested by Münster's *devastata* and the Vulg. *misera*.

Before the gods will I sing *praise* unto thee.
2 I will worship towards thy holy temple,
And praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth:
For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.
3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me,
And strengthenedst me *with* strength in my soul.
4 All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD,
When they hear the words of thy mouth.

before the gods] The Psalmist stands face to face with the might of the heathen world, apparently under the patronage and protection of powerful gods, but the sight does not shake his fidelity to Jehovah. It is not to be supposed that he would have admitted that these gods had a real existence; he speaks of them only as they existed in the minds of their worshippers; practically it is before those worshippers that he proclaims his faith. Cp. xcv. 3; xcvi. 4, 5. The LXX, probably fearing to seem to attribute a real existence to heathen gods, renders *Elōhīm* by *angels* (cp. xcvii. 7); but beautiful and solemn as is the thought that the angels are spectators of man's worship, *Elōhīm* can hardly bear that meaning here. The Targ. renders it *judges*, the Syr. *kings*, giving a good sense (cp. cxix. 46); but though the title *Elōhīm* is applied to judges in lxxxii. 1, 6, where they are spoken of as representatives of God, there would be no special fitness in the use of the word here.

will I sing praise] **will I make melody**: sing psalms of praise, as in ci. 1, and elsewhere. Some texts of the LXX, and the Vulg., add *because thou hast heard the words of my mouth* after the first line, others at the end of the verse. It is a gloss suggested by *v.* 4.

2 *a*. A reminiscence of v. 7.

and **give thanks unto** *thy name...for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name*] By the accomplishment of His promises Jehovah has surpassed all previous revelations of Himself. The expression, however, is a strange one; possibly *thy word* is a gloss, and we should read *thou hast magnified thy name above all things*[1]. The P.B.V., *thou hast magnified thy name and thy word above all things* (derived from Münster, 'Magnificasti supra omnia nomen tuum et eloquium tuum') involves a harsh asyndeton.

3. and *strengthenedst me*] R.V. **thou didst encourage me**, giving me a proud consciousness of strength; a bold use of the word which elsewhere denotes pride in a bad sense.

4—6. Jehovah's faithfulness to His promises will evoke the homage of the world.

4. *All the kings of the earth* **shall give thanks unto thee, Jehovah**]

[1] The reading of the Massora, כֹּל־ not הֹל־, is a reminiscence of this construction of the sentence. The Maqqēph should be omitted.

Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: 5
For great *is* the glory of the LORD.
Though the LORD *be* high, yet hath he respect unto the 6
lowly:
But the proud he knoweth afar off.
Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: 7
Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of
mine enemies,
And thy right hand shall save me.
The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: 8
Thy mercy, O LORD, *endureth* for ever:
Forsake not the works of thine own hands.

When the kings of the nations hear of Jehovah's promises to Israel and His fulfilment of them, they will join in the Psalmist's thanksgiving. Cp. lxviii. 29 ff.; cii. 15, 16.

5. *they shall sing* of *the ways of* Jehovah] They will celebrate His providential methods of dealing with His people. For *ways* cp. ciii. 7.

the glory of Jehovah] The revelation of His power and majesty in the deliverance of Israel. Cp. Is. xl. 5; lx. 1.

6. For though Jehovah is *high, yet* he seeth *the lowly*] Exalted as He is, Jehovah never loses sight of the lowly, and in due time raises them up (Ex. iii. 7; Is. lvii. 15; lxvi. 2; Ps. cxiii. 5 ff.): and the haughty *he knoweth* from afar: no distance hides them from His eye, and they cannot escape the punishment they deserve. Cp. xciv. 7 ff.; Job xxii. 12 ff.; and for *know* see note on i. 6.

7, 8. Though fresh troubles may still await Israel, Jehovah will not fail to carry out His purposes for them.

7. *wilt revive me*] Or, *preserve me alive*. Cp. lxxi. 20; cxix. 25 &c.; cxliii. 11.

thou shalt stretch forth thine hand] A common figure for the exertion of Divine power to help or punish. Cp. cxliv. 7; Ex. iii. 20; ix. 15.

thy right hand &c.] Cp. xvii. 7; cxxxix. 10.

8. *will perfect that which concerneth me*] Will accomplish His promises and purposes for me. Cp. lvii. 2; Phil. i. 6 (ἐπιτελεῖν is the word used in Aquila's version here).

forsake not the works of thine own hands] The plural *works* and the parallelism of the first line shew that the meaning is not 'Do not abandon Israel whom Thou hast made'; but 'Do not fail to carry forward to completion the mighty works which Thou hast undertaken to do for Israel.' Cp. xc. 16; xcii. 5; cxliii. 5.

PSALM CXXXIX.

The consciousness of the intimate personal relation between God and man which is characteristic of the whole Psalter reaches its climax here.

The omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence of Jehovah are no cold philosophical abstractions for the Psalmist. He realises most vividly that Jehovah is One Who knows all his thoughts and actions, One from Whose universal Presence he cannot escape, One Who has fashioned his frame and ordered his life. With prot and reverence he meditates on these truths in an address to God, recognising their mystery and awfulness, and seeking not to escape from God but to yield himself more fully to His control and guidance.

The Psalm falls into four divisions.

i. Jehovah knows every thought and action[7] (1—6).

ii. To escape from His Presence is impossible (7—12).

iii. Nor is this surprising, for it is He Who has moulded the Psalmist's frame and ordered his life, with unsearchable depth of wisdom (13—18).

iv. How can this All-seeing, Almighty God tolerate evil men? With such the Psalmist will have no fellowship. May God search his heart, and purge it from every evil way (19—24)!

The title *A Psalm of David* cannot indicate its authorship. The language of the Psalm is not pure Hebrew, but is marked by a strong Aramaic colouring. It resembles the language of the Book of Job, and in several respects the thought of the Psalm is also akin to that book. The problem of God's tolerance of the wicked perplexed the Psalmist (*vv.* 19 ff.), as it perplexed Job. *Vv.* 13—16 resemble Job x. 9 ff. *Elōah*, the common word for God in Job, but found only four times in the Psalter, occurs in *v.* 19; and the word for 'slay' in the same verse is used in Heb. elsewhere only in Job, though it is common in Aramaic.

The addition *of Zacharĭah*, in Cod. A of the LXX. with the further gloss in the margin, *in the dispersion* (both readings are found in the Zürich Psalter, T) may preserve a tradition of the exilic or post-exilic origin of the Psalm. But when or where it was written must remain unknown. If the *provenance* of the Book of Job could be determined, we might be on the track of the origin of this Psalm.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

139 O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me*.
2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising,
Thou understandest my thought afar off.

1—6. God's perfect knowledge of all the Psalmist's life and thoughts.

1. *searched me*] Cp. *v.* 23; Jer. xvii. 10.

and known me] Or, and knowest me, for nothing can be hid from that omniscient scrutiny.

2. *Thou knowest*] *Thou* is emphatic. It is God alone Who possesses this absolute knowledge of His creatures.

my downsitting and mine uprising] My whole life, at rest or in activity. Cp. cxxvii. 2; Deut. vi. 7.

thought] The word used here and in *v.* 17 is an Aramaism, found here only in the O.T.

Thou compassest my path and my lying down, 3
And art acquainted *with* all my ways.
For *there is* not a word in my tongue, 4
But lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.
Thou hast beset me behind and before, 5
And laid thine hand upon me.
Such knowledge *is* too wonderful for me; 6
It is high, I cannot attain unto it.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? 7
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

afar off] Cp. cxxxviii. 6; Jer. xxiii. 23. The P.B.V. *long before* is also a possible rendering. Neither space nor time exist for God.

3. *Thou compassest*] Rather, **Thou hast examined**, lit. *thou hast winnowed*, or *sifted*, subjecting my life to the closest and most discriminating investigation.

my path] Rather, *my walking*, contrasted with *my lying down*. Cp. Prov. vi. 22.

4. God knows not merely the spoken word which men can hear, but its true meaning, and the secret thoughts which prompt its utterance. But the verse may also be rendered, *For (when) a word is not yet on my tongue, Lo, thou* &c. Before thought has formed itself into words and found expression, the Searcher of hearts knows it.

5. *beset me*] The word is used of besieging a town. God hems him in on all sides so that he cannot escape. The P.B.V. *thou hast fashioned me* follows the LXX and other Ancient Versions in a less probable rendering.

laid thine hand upon me] God holds him fast in His grasp, exercises His authority over him. Cp. Job ix. 33.

6. A concluding exclamation of reverent awe. Such infinite knowledge baffles human thought to comprehend it. Cp. Rom. xi. 33.

(so) exalted (that) *I cannot attain unto it*] "The word used implies 'high so as to be inaccessible'; it is used, for instance, of an impregnable city, Deut. ii. 36" (Driver). It is also used of God, Is. ii. 11, 17; xii. 4.

7—12. God is everywhere present: man cannot escape or hide himself.

7. The power and presence of God are universal. The Psalmist's question does not imply that he wishes to escape from God, but that escape would be impossible if he wished it. The 'spirit of Jehovah' in the O.T. is "the living energy of a personal God" (see Swete in Hastings' *Bible Dict.* II. p. 404): His 'presence' (lit. *countenance*) is His personal manifestation of Himself in relation to men. See Oehler, *Theology of O.T.* I. § 57. Cp. Ex. xxxiii. 14, 15; Jon. i. 3, 10; Is. lxiii. 9, 10; Wisdom i. 7 ff.

8 If I ascend up *into* heaven, thou *art* there:
If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*.
9 *If* I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
10 Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me.
11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me;
Even the night *shall be* light about me.
12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee;
But the night shineth as the day:
The darkness and the light *are* both alike *to thee*.
13 For thou hast possessed my reins:

8. Cp. Amos ix. 2 ff.; Jer. xxiii. 24.

If I **should** *ascend up*] Another Aramaic word.

if I make my bed in hell] Render, and if I should make Sheol my couch.

9. **If I should lift up the wings of the dawn** &c.] If I were to fly with the swiftness of light from the east to the furthest west. The dawn swiftly spreading over the sky, is naturally represented as winged. Cp. 'wings of the wind,' Ps. xviii. 10, 'wings of the sun,' Mal. iv. 2.

The sea, from the position of the Mediterranean to the west of Palestine, denotes the West.

10. The thought in this context is not primarily that wherever he goes God's providential care accompanies him, but that there is no place in the universe where he can escape from the control and authority of God. "Dextra Dei ubique."

11, 12. **And if I say, Nay, but darkness might shroud me,**
And the light about me become night;
Even darkness hideth not from thee, &c.

It is as impossible to hide from God under cover of darkness as it is to escape from Him by change of place (*vv.* 8, 9). The A.V. *even the night shall be light about me* seems to mean that the light of God's presence will banish the terrors of darkness; but this sense does not fit the context. The Psalmist is not expressing his confidence in God's protection, but his conviction of His omniscience. Those who think to escape God's notice in the night as they avoid the eye of men (Job xxiv. 13—17) do but delude themselves. The word rendered *cover* or *shroud* is a rare one, and is elsewhere taken to mean *overwhelm* (R.V.) but this sense does not suit the context and we must either assume that it has an unusual meaning, or emend the text. Symm. and Jer. render *cover*.

13—18. God must know the Psalmist perfectly, for He ordered the first beginnings of his life, and foresaw all his destiny.

13. **For it was thou that didst form my reins**] Thou is emphatic. The connexion of thought expressed by *for* is not obvious; but it

Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.
I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully 14
made:
Marvellous *are* thy works;
And *that* my soul knoweth right well.
My substance was not hid from thee, 15
When I was made in secret,
And curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.
Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; 16
And in thy book all *my members* were written,

appears to give a reason for the intimate knowledge of which the preceding verses have spoken. 'Thou knowest me, for Thou didst create me.' *v.* 14 will then be a parenthetical exclamation of adoring wonder. The transposition of *vv.* 13, 14, proposed by some critics, removes the difficulty and gives a clearer connexion of thought, but poetry does not bind itself by forms of logic.

my reins] The inmost seat of the emotions, which God 'tries' (vii. 9).

thou hast covered me] Better, **thou didst knit me together, with** bones and sinews. Cp. Job x. 8—11.

14. *I will praise thee*] **I will give thanks unto thee.**

I am fearfully and wonderfully made] The Ancient Versions represent the second person, *thou art fearfully wondrous.*

marvellous] **Wonderful**, the same word as in the preceding clause.

15. *my substance*] R.V. my frame, lit. *my bones* or *skeleton.*

in secret] i.e in the womb (*v.* 13).

curiously wrought] i.e. fashioned with skill and care. (*Curious* = Lat. *curiosus*, 'wrought with care.' Cp. Ex. xxviii. 8, "the curious girdle of the ephod," R.V. "the cunningly woven band.") The word which means literally *woven* or *embroidered* with threads of different colours, is applied by a natural metaphor to the complex and intricate formation of the body.

in the lowest parts of the earth] In the womb, as dark and mysterious as the nether world. The formation of the body is meant, and there is no reference to the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls, which is found in Wisd. viii. 20; cp. Verg. *Aen.* VI. 713 ff., 884. See Schultz, *O.T. Theology*, Vol. II. p. 251, E.T.

16. *my substance, yet being unperfect*] R.V. **mine unperfect substance.** The word (*gōlem*) is a different one from that in *v.* 15, and denotes the undeveloped embryo. Cp. Aram. *gōlmā*, an unfinished vessel.

all my members] Lit. *all of them*, which A.V. and R.V. interpret to mean all the members into which the embryo was to develop. But it is better (cp. R.V. marg.) to regard the pronoun as anticipatory, and to render,

And in thy book were all of them written,

Which in continuance were fashioned, when *as yet there was* none of them.

17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God:
How great is the sum of them!

18 *If* I should count them, they are more in number than the sand:
When I awake, I am still with thee.

19 Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God:

Even days which were formed,
When as yet there was none of them.

Each day of his life with all its history was pre-determined by the Creator and recorded in His book, before one of them actually was in existence:—a clear expression of the truth that there is an ideal plan of life providentially marked out for every individual. (Eph. ii. 10.)

The *Q'rē* or traditional reading of the Hebrew text, reads *lō*, 'for it' instead of *lō'* 'not' (see note on Ps. c. 3), giving the sense, *and for it there was one among them*: one of them was pre-ordained as 'its day,' the day of its birth. Cp. 'his day,' Job iii. 1.

17. To me then, who am the object of all this care, *how precious are thy thoughts, O God!* It is my delight to meditate upon the purposes of Thy Providence. **How vast are the sums of them!** There are, as it were, many items in that inexhaustible theme, each of which is immeasurable. Cp. xxxvi. 7; xcii. 5; Job xxvi. 14.

It is possible however that the word rendered *precious* means rather *incomprehensible, overwhelming*; and that the Psalmist is contrasting his knowledge of God with God's knowledge of him. 'Thou knowest all *my* thoughts and ways; but to me *Thy* thoughts are immeasurable and incomprehensible.'

18. *moe*] For this archaism cp. lxix. 4.

when I awake &c.] His last thoughts as he falls asleep are of God; and when he awakes, he finds himself still in His Presence, still occupied in contemplating the mystery of His Being. Cp. lxiii. 6. The Targum, "I awake in the world to come, and I am still with Thee"; and Symm. "I shall awake, and I shall be for ever with Thee," interpret the words of the resurrection, but this cannot be their original meaning.

19—24. But how can this omniscient God tolerate the existence of wicked men, who blaspheme and hate Him? With such the Psalmist will have no fellowship; and he concludes with a prayer that God will purify his heart, and lead him in the right way.

19. *Surely* &c.] Rather as R.V. marg., **Oh that thou wouldest slay the wicked.** The problem of the existence of evil perplexes him, as it perplexed Job (xxi. 7 ff.). Evil for him is no abstract idea; it is embodied in evil men. Will not God free His world from this insult to His government? Cp. civ. 35.

Depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.
For they speak against thee wickedly, 20
And thine enemies take *thy name* in vain.
Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? 21
And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?
I hate them *with* perfect hatred: 22
I count them mine enemies.
Search me, O God, and know my heart: 23
Try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, 24

depart from me] lest I be tempted by your example and involved in your fate. Cp. vi. 8; cxix. 115.

ye bloody men] Men of blood, who do not shrink from violence and murder (v. 6; Prov. xxix. 10).

20. *For they speak against thee*] This rendering involves a questionable construction. That of R.V. marg. *utter thy name*, lit. *thee*, i.e. swear falsely by thy name, suits the parallelism, but is also doubtful. Most probably the word should be read with different vowels, rebel against thee (יַמְרוּךָ for יְמָרוּךָ); cp. lxxviii. 40.

thine enemies take thy name *in vain*] The text is difficult and perhaps corrupt. The word rendered *thine enemies* has this meaning in Aramaic, but not in Hebrew: *thy name* is not expressed: the verb is spelt anomalously. But slight alterations of the text would give the sense, *and take thy name in vain.*

21. *am not I grieved with*] Do not I loathe, as in cxix. 158.

22. The energy of the Psalmist's indignation seems to many readers to be a jarring note: yet it is but the limited and imperfect form in which he expresses his intense hatred of evil. "The duty of keeping alive in the human heart the sense of burning indignation against moral evil—against selfishness, against injustice, against untruth, in ourselves as well as in others,—that is as much a part of the Christian as of the Jewish dispensation." Stanley, *Lect. on Jewish Church*, i. p. 216 (Lect. xi), quoted by Kay.

23, 24. In no spirit of presumptuous self-confidence, but with an honest desire to be saved from self-deception and guided in the way of true life, the Psalmist ends by inviting and welcoming that Divine scrutiny which he knows to be a fact and from which he cannot escape (*vv.* 1 ff.), and praying for that Divine guidance which is indispensable for him.

23. *Search me* &c.] God has searched him and knows him (*v.* 1): but he will welcome the continuance of that piercing scrutiny, not seek to avoid it. Cp. xxvi. 2.

24. any *wicked way*] Lit. *any way of grief*, or *pain*; conduct which leads to suffering and ruin. Some critics, comparing Is. xlviii. 5, explain *way of idolatry*, in contrast to *the way of Jehovah* (xxv. 4), but there is no hint that this was the special danger of the Psalmist.

And lead me in the way everlasting.

the way everlasting] A way of life (xvi. 11; Prov. xii. 28) and peace (Is. lix. 8), the opposite to the way of ruin and death. See i. 6; xxv. 4, 5; Jer. xxi. 8. Whether the Psalmist's view was limited to this world, or whether he saw that such a way must lead on to fuller life after death, cannot be decided with certainty. Some render *the ancient way*, and follow the Targum in explaining it to mean the good old way in which the godly men of former ages walked (cp. Jer. vi. 16, xviii. 15); but this sense is less obvious.

PSALM CXL.

Psalms cxl–cxliii form a group distinguished by external and internal characteristics.

(1) All bear the name of David: three are entitled '*a Psalm* [*Mizmor*] of David,' a designation comparatively rare in Books IV and V; and one is entitled '*Maschil* of David,' a designation which occurs nowhere else in these books. Ps. cxlii is the only Psalm in these books which has a title indicating the occasion to which it is supposed to refer. Ps. cxl is inscribed *For the Precentor*, which is only found twice again in these books. *Selah* occurs three times in cxl and once in cxliii, but nowhere else in these books. These external characteristics suggest that these Psalms may have been derived from some source in which such terms and notes were common, as they are in the earlier books.

(2) They are marked by a general similarity of thought and language. Compare especially cxli. 1, cxlii. 1, cxliii. 1, cxl. 6: cxlii. 3, cxliii. 4: cxlii. 7, cxliii. 11: cxl. 5, cxli. 9, cxlii. 3: cxl. 9, cxli. 10.

(3) They appear to reflect the same or similar circumstances. In cxl we see the Psalmist exposed to the plots of merciless and unscrupulous enemies, who are endeavouring to ruin him by calumny and slander; in cxli we watch him struggling against the temptation to sacrifice principle and cast in his lot with the godless party; in cxlii his utter solitude and helplessness are pathetically described; in cxliii his situation has become even more desperate: all will soon be over if he is not speedily rescued from the hands of his persecutors.

It is then not improbable that they were composed by the same author. This author however can hardly have been David. While it would be rash to affirm that all the Psalms of David must have been included in earlier collections incorporated in the Psalter, these Psalms lack the marks of originality. They are full of reminiscences of earlier Psalms, some of which, e.g. Ps. lxxvii, are of comparatively late date, and probably they shew traces of familiarity with Job and Proverbs. They may have the name of David prefixed to them because they were taken from a collection bearing the name of David, or because they were recognised as imitations of Psalms believed to be his. Delitzsch supposes that they were "dramatic lyrics," written to illustrate episodes in the life of David, and originally stood in some historical work, from which they were transferred to the Psalter. But dependent as they are upon earlier Psalms for their language, they have a vigour and

pathos of their own which points to their having sprung from the actual experience of the author.

Who he was or in what period he lived cannot be determined. The times of Manasseh's persecution; the Exile; the post exilic period, have been suggested; and on the whole it seems most probable that the Psalms reflect the persecution of earnestly-minded religious men by a worldly and unscrupulous party at some time in the unsettled circumstances of this later period.

Some critics suppose that the speaker in these Psalms is not an individual, but the nation; but though some phrases favour this view, the poet's utterances seem to be inspired by the reality of personal experience, and the ascription of the Psalms to David shews that at the time of their incorporation in the Psalter they were regarded as personal.

The structure of Ps. cxl is regular. It consists of four stanzas of six lines each, the second containing two verses, the others three; and a concluding stanza of four lines.

i. The Psalmist prays to be preserved from the plots of arrogant and unscrupulous enemies, who are endeavouring to ruin him by virulent calumny and treacherous plots (1—3).

ii. He repeats his prayer, with further description of the treacherous character of his enemies' schemes under the usual figure of snares and traps (4, 5).

iii. Further prayer that these plots may fail (6—8),

iv. and that retribution may overtake their authors (9—11).

v. Concluding expression of confidence in Jehovah's guardianship of the righteous (12, 13).

Compare generally Psalms vii, lviii, lxiv.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man: 140
Preserve me from the violent man;
Which imagine mischiefs in *their* heart; 2
Continually are they gathered together *for* war.
They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; 3

1—3. Prayer for deliverance from the machinations of calumnious enemies.

1. *the evil man...the violent man*] Both words may be collective; *evil men...men of violent deeds*: but the second may single out a particular individual as the leader of the treacherous hostility of which the Psalmist complains. For the phrase *man* or *men of violent deeds* (plur.) cp. *v.* 4 and 2 Sam. xxii. 49; *v.* 11 and Ps. xviii. 48 have the sing., *violence.*

2. Who have devised evils *in* their *heart*] Secretly and deliberately.

continually &c.] Every day do they stir up strife: lit. *wars.* They are perpetually trying to pick a quarrel with me.

3. *They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent*] The lying tongue is elsewhere compared to the sword or arrow which wounds

Adder's poison *is* under their lips. Selah.

4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked;
Preserve me from the violent man;
Who have purposed to overthrow my goings.
5 The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords;
They have spread a net by the way side;
They have set grins for me. Selah.

6 I said unto the LORD, Thou *art* my God:
Hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD.
7 O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation,
Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.

(lii. 2; lv. 21; lvii. 4; lix. 7; lxiv. 3), or the serpent which inflicts a poisonous bite (lviii. 3, 4); and here the Psalmist combines the metaphors. They deliberately prepare to inflict a deadly wound by slander.

adder's poison is *under their lips*] Hidden like the poison gland of the asp. The words are quoted in Rom. iii. 13. from the LXX.

4, 5. Repeated prayer for deliverance from their plots.

4. *to overthrow my goings*] To trip me up and overthrow me. Cp. cxviii. 13. R.V. **to thrust aside my steps.**

5. For the figures cp. xxxi. 4; cxix. 110; cxli. 9; cxlii. 3. The hunter sets his snares in the 'run' of the animal he wishes to catch, and the Psalmist's enemies are scheming to ruin him as he goes about his daily duties. Cp. Matt. xxii. 15, "how they might ensnare (παγιδεύσωσιν, cp. LXX παγίδα here) him in talk." He calls them *proud*, for their hostility to God's servant is virtually a defiance of God (x. 2).

grins] More properly, **baits** or **lures**, to entice him to his ruin. *Grins*, the original reading of the A.V. of 1611, restored by Scrivener, is an obsolete word of the same meaning as *gins*, which has been substituted for it in modern editions of the A.V. here and in cxli. 9. For examples of its use see Wright's *Bible Word Book*.

6—8. Appeal to Jehovah, the Helper in time of need.

6. *I said*] **I have said**, or, **I say**. Cp. xvi. 1; xxxi. 14. In his distress he appeals to Jehovah, pleading the relation which entitles him to expect protection. Cp. lxiii. 1; cxliii. 10.

hear] R.V., **Give ear unto**.

7. *O GOD the Lord*] **Jehovah, Lord**. Cp. cix. 21 (note); cxli. 8.

thou hast covered my head] Protected it as with a helmet. Cp. lx. 7; Is. lix. 17; Eph. vi. 17; 1 Thess. v. 8. The perfect tense might refer to past experience, but is probably to be taken as a perfect of certainty: *thou wilt assuredly cover.*

the day of battle] Lit. *of armour*, when armour is needed. The language is of course figurative, for the 'war' which his enemies were making upon him was carried on with the weapons of slander and calumny.

Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked: 8
Further not his wicked device;
Lest they exalt themselves. Selah.

As for the head of those that compass me about, 9
Let the mischief of their own lips cover them.
Let burning coals fall upon them: 10
Let them be cast into the fire;
Into deep pits, *that* they rise not up again.
Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth: 11
Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow *him*.

I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the 12
afflicted,
And the right of the poor.

8. *further not his* evil *device*] Suffer it not to issue in success.

lest *they exalt themselves*] The construction is harsh, whether we render thus, or, 'for then *will they exalt themselves*,' and probably the word belongs to the next verse.

9—11. May retribution overtake my enemies!

9. A word seems to be wanting at the beginning of the verse, and if the last word of *v.* 8, with the change of a single letter (ירימו for ירומו), is prefixed to this verse, it reads, *When those that compass me about lift up the head, let the mischief* &c. Let the mischief they are trying to do me by slander and calumny recoil upon themselves, and overwhelm them. Cp. cxli. 10.

10. Let the fate of Sodom overtake these defiant offenders! Possibly we should read, comparing xi. 6, *May he rain hot coals upon them! may he cast them into the fire!*

deep pits] A word of uncertain meaning, found here only. Some render *whirlpools*: cp. R.V. marg. *floods*. If they try to escape the fiery storm, may they be swept away by torrents!

that *they rise not up again*] Let their fall be final and irremediable (xxxvi. 12), in contrast to that of the righteous, who falls to rise again (Prov. xxiv. 16).

11. A slanderer shall not be established in the land] Cp. ci. 5.

to overthrow him] Again the idea is that of the evil which he devises for others relentlessly pursuing him, lit. *with thrust upon thrust*. Cp. xxxv. 5, 6; Prov. xiii. 21. The Targ. paraphrases, "misfortune shall hunt the violent man; the angel of death shall drive him down to hell."

12, 13. The destiny of the righteous contrasted with the fate of the wicked.

12. Jehovah is the Judge Who rights the weak and oppressed. Cp. vii. 8, 9; ix. 4; &c.

13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name:
The upright shall dwell in thy presence.

13. *Surely*] The particle *'ak* expresses the thought, *Nay but after all*; in spite of present trials.

shall dwell in thy presence] In the land where Jehovah's Presence is especially manifested. Cp. cii. 28. The manifestation of God which is destruction to the wicked (ix. 3) is security and happiness to the upright. Cp. xi. 7, note; xvi. 11; lxxxix. 15.

PSALM CXLI.

The Psalmist prays that his prayer may be accepted as an evening sacrifice (1, 2); that he may be preserved from sin in word and thought and deed (3, 4), and welcome the reproof of the righteous rather than yield to the temptation to join the godless in their life of selfish ease and sensual enjoyment (5). When the leaders of the godless party have met with the fate which they deserve, their followers will listen to his teaching, but for the present the Psalmist and his friends are like a routed army, the bones of whose slain lie bleaching on the field of battle (6, 7). Yet even in this extremity he can look with patience to Jehovah for deliverance from the snares of his enemies, whose malice will bring about their own ruin (8—10).

Such is an attempt to trace the course of thought in the Psalm; but it must be admitted that while the meaning of *vv.* 1—5 and 8—10 is clear, *vv.* 6, 7 are in themselves obscure and stand in no clear connexion with the rest of the Psalm. Either these verses do not belong to the Psalm and have come into their present position by accident; or they are intentionally couched in enigmatic and figurative language, which is unintelligible without some knowledge of the events and circumstances to which they allude.

The use of this Psalm in the early Church at the beginning of the Evening Service, as Ps. lxiii was used at the beginning of the Morning Service, was naturally suggested by *v.* 2. It was called ὁ ἐπιλύχνιος ψαλμός, because the service was held at the time when the lamps were lighted. See Bingham's *Antiquities*, Book xiii. ch. 11, and the passages from the *Apostolic Constitutions* (ii. 59, viii. 35) there quoted.

A Psalm of David.

141 LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me;
Give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee.

1, 2. Introductory appeal for a favourable hearing.

1. *I cry unto thee*] Or, I have called upon thee (R.V.): he has already been praying, and now pleads for a speedy answer, *make haste unto me* (lxx. 5), i.e. make haste to help me (xxii. 19; xxxviii. 22; xl. 13).

Let my prayer be set forth before thee *as* incense;
And the lifting up of my hands *as* the evening sacrifice.
Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth;
Keep the door of my lips.

2. *Let my prayer be set forth*] Lit. *be prepared, set in order.* The same word is used of the service of the Temple in 2 Chron. xxix. 35; xxxv. 10, 16. Or, *be presented, avail.*

incense] Either the daily offering of incense by the priests upon the altar of incense (Ex. xxx. 7, 8), or the 'sweet smoke' from the *azkārā* or 'memorial,' the portion of the meal-offering which was mixed with oil and frankincense and burnt upon the altar (Lev. ii. 2, see note on the title of Ps xxxviii). may be meant. But in the only other passage in the Psalter in which the word 'incense' (*q'tōreth*) is used (lxvi. 15), it denotes the 'sweet smoke' of the sacrifice generally; and as in the next line the Psalmist mentions the evening oblation or meal-offering, he may be thinking of the burnt-offering of which the meal-offering was the accompaniment.

the lifting up of my hands] The gesture of prayer (xxviii. 2; lxiii. 4; 1 Tim. ii. 8), the outward symbol of an uplifted heart (xxv. 1).

as *the evening* oblation] *Minchāh* properly denotes the oblation or meal-offering which accompanied the daily burnt-offering (Ex. xxix. 38—42); but it may be used here to include the whole of the evening sacrifice (cp. 2 Kings xvi. 15; Ezra ix. 4, 5; Dan. ix. 21); or the burnt-offering may have been already alluded to (see preceding note) by the word 'incense.'

The *evening* sacrifice may be specially named because the Psalmist was in the habit of praying at that time (cp. Dan. ix. 21), and composed the Psalm for use as an evening Psalm.

The sweet smoke of the sacrifice or of incense rising towards heaven was a natural symbol of prayer ascending to God. Cp. Apoc. v. 8, where incense represents the prayers of the saints; and Apoc. viii. 3, 4, where the angel adds incense to the prayers of the saints. It would seem that the Psalmist lived at a time when the daily sacrifice was suspended, or at a distance from Jerusalem; but he had learnt that he could approach God as truly in prayer as if he were assisting at the daily sacrifice. Cp. Mal. i. 11. For the correspondence of prayer and sacrifice cp. Prov. xv. 8; Hos. xiv. 2; Ps. xix. 14, note.

3—5. Prayer for grace to resist the temptation to sin in word and thought and deed.

3. Cp. xxxiv. 13; xxxix. 1; Prov. xiii. 3; xxi. 23. The special point of the prayer is that he may be guarded from adopting the profane language of the ungodly men by whom he is surrounded. Cp. lxxiii. 8 ff. This verse is apparently quoted in Ecclesiasticus xxii. 27, "Who shall set a watch over my mouth?"

keep the door of my lips] Parallelism and construction suggest the reading, *a guard over the door of my lips*. For the figure cp. Micah vii. 5.

4 Incline not my heart to *any* evil thing,
To practise wicked works with men that work iniquity:
And let me not eat of their dainties.

5 Let the righteous smite me; *it shall be* a kindness:
And let him reprove me; *it shall be* an excellent oil,
Which shall not break my head:
For yet my prayer also *shall be* in their calamities.
6 When their judges are overthrown in stony places,

4. *Incline not my heart* &c.] Leave me not by the withdrawal of Thy grace, to turn aside from the path of right. Cp. Ps. cxix. 10, 133.

to practise &c.] To occupy myself in wicked practices with men who are workers of iniquity. The word for *men* implies that they are men of rank and position who set this bad example. Cp. iv. 2, note.

let me not eat of their dainties] Let me not share their life of sensual luxury, the means for which are procured by violence and injustice. Cp. Prov. iv. 17, "For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence": xxiv. 1, 2. There does not seem to be any allusion to participation in idolatrous sacrifices.

5. Let the righteous smite me, it shall be kindness:
And let him reprove me, it shall be as oil for the head;
Let not my head refuse it:
But still let my prayer be against their evil doings.

From the prayer of *v.* 4 it is clear that the Psalmist had felt the seductiveness of worldly luxury, and apparently (cp. *v.* 9) godless men had been endeavouring to entice him to cast in his lot with them. On the other hand it would seem that he had been tempted to resent the correction and reproof of the godly, possibly not always offered in the most conciliatory way. He therefore prays that he may welcome correction as kindness, and reproof as the "ointment and perfume" which "rejoice the heart" (Prov. xxvii. 9), alluding no doubt to the oil with which his head would have been anointed at the banquets of the wicked (Am. vi. 6). *Smite* is of course a metaphor for severe correction. Cp. Prov. xxvii. 6, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." The Book of Proverbs insists constantly on the value of reproof, which the wise man welcomes and the fool resents (iii. 11 f.; xiii. 18; xv. 5, 31, 32; xxviii. 23), and the duty of neighbourly reproof is enjoined in the Law (Lev. xix. 17). Cp. Eccl. vii. 5.

The last line is obscure, and the text is possibly corrupt, but the general sense may be, 'Let me not resent reproof, and associate with the wicked, but let me continue to pray against (or, in the midst of) their evil deeds.' Neglecting the Heb. accents we might render, *Let not my head refuse it, but again!* (i.e. let him repeat his reproofs), *and let my prayer be against their evil deeds.*

6, 7. It is not difficult to translate these verses, but it seems impos-

They shall hear my words; for they are sweet.
Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth,
As when one cutteth and cleaveth *wood* upon the earth. 7

sible to give any satisfactory explanation of them in their present context. They may be rendered:

6. **When their judges have been thrown down by the sides of the cliff,**
   They (or men) will hear my words, that they are sweet.
7. **As when one splitteth and cleaveth (wood) upon the earth,**
   Our bones are scattered at the mouth of Sheol.

Precipitation from a rock was a common method of execution in ancient times (cp. 2 Chron. xxv. 12; Luke iv. 29), and the meaning would seem to be that when the judges or leaders of the "workers of iniquity" mentioned in *v.* 4 (for it is to them that the pronoun *their* must refer) have met with the fate they deserve, their followers (or people in general) will welcome the Psalmist's advice and exhortation. 'Judges' however, though it may mean 'rulers' (Mic. v. 1; Dan. ix. 12), is not a natural word to use for the leaders of a class or party. Must not the reference be rather to the corrupt judges by whose help the rich and powerful procured the condemnation and even the judicial murder of the poor and defenceless? Cp. Mic. vii. 2, 3.

Taken by itself the next verse would seem to describe a national disaster, some defeat after which the bodies of the slain lay unburied on the field of battle. Cp. liii. 5. But there is no hint of such a disaster in the rest of the Psalm, and we can only suppose that the Psalmist, when he uses the first person, '*our* bones,' is speaking on behalf of those with whom he is in sympathy, the godly who are the victims of persecution and oppression. While the wicked and their judges are still in power they are murdered, and their dead bodies call for vengeance; or, if the expression be taken as hyperbolical (cp. Mic. iii. 2, 3), they are deprived of all that makes life worth living, and are no better than bleaching skeletons, ready to be swallowed up by the greedy jaws of Sheol. Some MSS of the LXX, and the Syriac, read *their bones*, i.e. the bones of the judges who have been executed, but this is probably only a conjectural correction to get rid of the difficulty.

The meaning of the last line is uncertain. Most of the Ancient Versions (Aq. Symm. Jer. Targ. Syr.), and most modern commentators, render as R.V., *as when one ploweth and cleaveth the earth*, on the ground that this rendering is required by the usage of the language. In Aramaic and in cognate languages the first verb means to *plow, cultivate*: it comes from the same root as the modern Arabic *fellah*. But neither it nor the second verb is used in the O.T. in this sense, and the comparison of the bodies or bones of the slain to the clods or stones turned up by the plough is not an obvious one. On the other hand the second verb may certainly mean *to cleave wood* (Eccl. x. 9), and the first is used in 2 Kings iv. 39 of slicing up gourds; and the comparison of the scattered and bleaching bones of the slain to the

8 But mine eyes *are* unto thee, O God the Lord:
In thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute.
9 Keep me from the snare *which* they have laid for me,
And the grins of the workers of iniquity.
10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
Whilst that I withal escape.

splinters and chips made by the woodcutter at his work and left scattered and uncared for is forcible and graphic.

8—10. Concluding expression of confidence, with prayer for preservation and deliverance.

8. *But mine eyes*] The conjunction must be rendered **For**, which gives no sense in connexion with *v.* 7. It must introduce the reason for the prayers of *vv.* 1—4, or for the resolution to continue in prayer with which *v.* 5 ends. The impossibility of connecting *v.* 8 with *vv.* 6, 7 is an additional reason for thinking that these verses are misplaced.

mine eyes are *unto thee*] The attitude of expectant prayer. Cp. xxv. **15**, note.

O GOD the Lord] **Jehovah, Lord.** Cp. cxl. 7, and see note on cix. 21.

in thee is my trust] **In thee have I taken refuge.** He has put himself under Jehovah's protection, and appeals to Him on the ground of this relationship. Cp. ii. 12; vii. 1; lvii. 1, and many other passages.

leave not my soul destitute] Rather, as R.V. marg., *pour not thou out my life*, suffer me not to perish. Cp. Is. liii. 12. The figure is explained by the identification of life with the blood.

9. Cp. **cxl. 4, 5.**

grins] Rather, **baits** or **lures**, the sensual temptations by which they are endeavouring to entice him (*v.* 4). For *grins* see on **cxl. 5.**

10. *into their own nets*] Heb. *into his own nets*, i.e. each into his own net. "The engiuer" is "hoist with his own petar." For the thought that the plots of the wicked recoil upon themselves cp. cxl. 11; vii. 15, 16; ix. 16.

withal escape] Lit. *pass on* unharmed, *at the same time* as they are caught in their own snare.

Additional Note.

The P.B.V. of *vv.* 5—7 gives a striking example of the use which Coverdale made of S. Münster's version in revising his translation of 1535 for the 'Great Bible' of 1539 (see *Introd.* p. lxxiii), and also of the variations between the editions of the Great Bible.

Coverdale's version of 1535 is: "Let the rightuous (rather) smite me frendly, and reprove me: so wil I take it, as though he had poured oyle upō my heade: it shal not hurte my heade, yee I wil praye yet for their wickednesse. Their iudges stōble at the stone, yet heare they my wordes, y^t^ they be ioyfull. Oure bones lye scatered before ye pytt, like as when one graueth and dyggeth vp the grounde."

In the Great Bible of 1539, reprinted in April 1540, the only change (with the exception of variations of spelling) is in *v.* 6, which runs: "Let theyr judges stomble in stony places: that they may heare my wordes, for they are swete."

But in the second Great Bible, also published in 1540, all the changes with which we are familiar in the P.B.V. have been introduced. The passage runs thus: "Let the ryghteous rather smyte me frendly and rebroue me. But let not ther preciouse balmes: breake myne heed, yee, I wyll praye yet agaynste theyr wyckednesse. Lett theyr iudges be ouerthrowen in stony places: that they may heare my wordes: for they are swete. Our bones lye scatered before the pit, lyke as whe one breaketh and heweth wood upō yᵉ erth."

The substantial changes are all taken from Münster's version: "Percutiat me iustus in pietate atque redarguat me, oleum autem praecipuum non frangat caput meum: quia adhuc oratio mea contra mala eorum. Praecipitentur in locis petrosis iudices eorum, ut audiant sermones meos, quoniam suaves sunt. Sicut qui frangit et dissecat (ligna) in terra, dispersa sunt ossa nostra iuxta sepulchrum."

PSALM CXLII.

In profound despondency the Psalmist lays his trouble before Jehovah (1, 2), though Jehovah well knows all the circumstances of his life, and the dangers which beset him in his isolation and defencelessness (3, 4). Jehovah has been and is his only hope, and to Him he looks for deliverance which will enable him to give thanks publicly in the midst of rejoicing sympathisers (5—7).

The situation of the Psalmist is desperate. If *v.* 7 and cxliii. 3 are to be understood literally, he was an actual prisoner in a gloomy dungeon; but 'prison' may be only a figure for distress.

Some commentators suppose that the speaker is Israel, languishing in the prison of exile and despairing of return, but apart from the strongly personal tone of the Psalm, in *v.* 7 the Psalmist is distinguished from 'the righteous,' who must be (cp. cxli. 5) faithful Israelites. It is impossible to suppose that future converts to the worship of Jehovah are meant.

For *Maschīl*, which is only found here in Books IV and V, see *Introd.* p. xix. With *when he was in the cave* cp. the title of Ps. lvii. The cave of Adullam (1 Sam. xxii) or that of Engedi (1 Sam. xxiv) may be meant. For *a prayer* cp. the titles of Pss. xvii. lxxxvi, xc and cii, the subscription to Ps. lxxii, and Hab. iii. 1.

Maschil of David; A Prayer when he was in the cave.

I cried unto the LORD *with* my voice; 142
With my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.
I poured out my complaint before him; 2
I shewed before him my trouble.

1, 2. The Psalmist's resolve to seek relief by laying his distress before Jehovah.

1. **Aloud to Jehovah will I cry;**
   Aloud to Jehovah will I make supplication:
2. **I will pour out before him my complaint;**
   My distress before him will I declare.

Aloud, lit. *with my voice*, not merely in silent prayer, but with cries which give relief to pent up feeling and express the intensity of distress.

3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me,
Then thou knewest my path.
In the way wherein I walked
Have they privily laid a snare for me.
4 I looked *on my* right hand, and beheld,
But *there was* no man that would know me:
Refuge failed me;
No man cared for my soul.
5 I cried unto thee, O LORD:
I said, Thou *art* my refuge

Cp. iii. 4; xxx. 8; and for 'cry,' a word expressing the cry of need, anxiety, distress, cp. *v.* 5; xxii. 5; lxxvii. 1; cvii. 13, 19.

poured out my complaint] Cp. cii title; xlii. 4; lxii. 8.

3, 4. Jehovah knows his peril, and his loneliness.

3. When my spirit fainteth upon me, THOU knowest my path.
In the way wherein I must walk have men hidden a snare for me.

4. Look on the right hand and see, for I have none that acknowledgeth me:
There is no asylum left me; my soul hath none that careth for her.

Though he will tell Jehovah of his distress, he knows that, even if he has no human sympathisers, He at any rate (THOU is emphatic) knows it already. His spirit faints (lxxvii. 3; cxliii. 4; Jonah ii. 7) within him, literally *upon* him, for the spirit (as elsewhere the soul or heart) is distinguished from a man's whole 'self,' and regarded as acting upon him from without (cp. xlii. 4); he is in despair, but his comfort is that Jehovah knows the course which he must take (cxliii. 8), and the perils which beset him from treacherous enemies.

4. The Massoretic text reads the imperative *look...and see.* The rendering of P.B.V. and A.V. *I looked...and saw* (*beheld*) follows the LXX, Vulg., Syr., and Targ., but requires a change in the vocalisation of the Hebrew words. The indicative *I looked* is the more obvious reading; but the appeal to Jehovah, *look!* is more forcible. Cp. Lam. i. 11; ii. 20; v. 1.

on my *right hand*] Where his protector would be standing if he had one. Cp. xvi. 8; cix. 31; cx. 5; cxxi. 5. But there is no one to acknowledge him as his client (Ruth ii. 10, 19) and defend him. He has no asylum left: lit. *a place of flight is perished from me.* Cp. Job xi. 20; Jer. xxv. 35; Am. ii. 14.

With the last clause cp. Jer. xxx. 17, "Yonder is Zion, who hath none to care for her."

5—7. Reminding God of his devotion in past times, he prays for a speedy answer to his prayer.

5. *I cried...I said*] I have cried...I have said. The perfect tense

And my portion in the land of the living.
Attend unto my cry;
For I am brought very low:
Deliver me from my persecutors;
For they are stronger than I.
Bring my soul out of prison,
That *I* may praise thy name:
The righteous shall compass me about;
For thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

describes what he has done in the past and is still doing. For the form of expression *I have said* cp. cxl. 6; for *my refuge* (a different word from that in *v.* 4) see xci. 2; Jer. xvii. 17; &c.; for *my portion* see xvi. 5; lxxiii. 26; cxix. 57; Lam. iii. 24; for *in the land of the living* cp. xxvii. 13; cxvi. 9. He trusts that he "will not die but live and declare the works of the Lord."

6. A mosaic of phrases which occur elsewhere. Cp. xvii. 1; lxxix. 8; vii. 1; xxxi. 15; xviii. 17.

7. *Bring my soul out of prison*] Probably to be understood figuratively, 'bring my soul out of distress' (cxliii. 11). Cp. Is. xli. 7, of the Exile; Ps. cvii. 10. But it may mean that he was actually in prison. Cp. cxliii. 3.

praise thy name] Give thanks unto thy name, as in cxl. 13.

the righteous shall compass me about] The loyal worshippers of Jehovah will gather round him to share in his thanksgivings. Cp. xxii. 22 ff. The meaning of the verb however is not certain, and some authorities, both ancient and modern, render, as in R.V. marg., *crown themselves because of me*, i.e. rejoice in my deliverance; but this explanation is improbable, as is also the rendering of the LXX, "the righteous will wait for me, till thou hast recompensed me." There were then some 'righteous' men left; the Psalmist was not so absolutely isolated as his complaint in *v.* 4 seemed to shew; but probably friends and sympathisers were in no position to help him in his present distress, and practically he was alone, like Elijah in the wilderness.

because thou dealest *bountifully with me*] Cp. xiii. 6.

PSALM CXLIII.

Jehovah's servant recognises that his sufferings are the merited punishment of sin, and pleads for a merciful hearing. The recollection of the manifestations of Jehovah's lovingkindness in ancient times makes him long for some fresh exhibition of His goodness (1—6).

He prays for a speedy answer, for direction, for deliverance, for instruction, and for the destruction of the enemies who are seeking to destroy him (7—12).

The Psalm consists of two equal divisions, separated by *Selah*, and in each of them the verses are arranged in pairs.

Much in the Psalm favours the view that the Servant of Jehovah who speaks is Israel, languishing in the prison of exile, or all but crushed out of existence by relentless enemies in one of the gloomy periods of its history after the Exile.

On the other hand much in the Psalm appears to be the prayer of an individual, and the title implies that at an early date it was assumed to be the utterance of an individual. If we are right in regarding the other Psalms of this group as personal rather than national, it will be natural to take the same view of this Psalm. The LXX adds to the title 'when his son [v.l. Absalom his son] was pursuing him.' But it is not specially appropriate to that occasion, and in this Psalm, even more than in the others of the group, the dependence on earlier Psalms is unmistakable. The second half in particular is almost entirely a mosaic of phrases taken from other Psalms.

As one of the seven "Penitential Psalms" (see note on Ps. cii) it is appointed for use on Ash Wednesday.

A Psalm of David.

143 Hear my prayer, O LORD,
Give ear to my supplications:
In thy faithfulness answer me, *and* in thy righteousness.
2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant:
For in thy sight shall no *man* living be justified.

1, 2. An appeal for mercy.

1. At first sight it seems inconsistent that the Psalmist should appeal to Jehovah's righteousness, and yet (*v.* 2) deprecate being put on his trial. But Jehovah's righteousness here denotes His unvarying conformity to His own character, that absolute perfection of dealing which is the perpetual expression of His unchanging Will. Similarly His faithfulness is the attribute which makes it impossible that He should be false to the covenant which He has made with His servants. And as He has revealed Himself as a God of mercy and forgiveness (Ex. xxxiv. 5—7), the Psalmist can boldly plead for a merciful answer on the ground of His righteousness and faithfulness. Cp. St John's words "He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins" (1 John i. 9); Ps. v. 8; xxxi. 1.

2. *enter not into judgment with thy servant*] Do not put me on my trial and pass sentence on me according to my deserts. For the phrase cp. Job ix. 32; xiv. 3; Is. iii. 14.

Thy servant is not a mere formal expression of humility: it denotes 'one who is devoted to Thy service,' and this relation is the ground of his plea. Cp. *v.* 12.

be justified] Rather, be righteous. Cp. cxxx. 3, and many passages in Job, where the truth of man's unholiness in the sight of God is emphasised, e.g. iv. 17; ix. 2; xv. 14; xxv. 4. St Paul quotes this passage freely in Rom. iii. 20, Gal. ii. 16, substituting *πᾶσα σὰρξ*, 'all flesh,' for *πᾶς ζῶν*.

For the enemy hath persecuted my soul;
He hath smitten my life down to the ground;
He hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead.
Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me;
My heart within me is desolate.
I remember the days of old;
I meditate on all thy works;
I muse on the work of thy hands.
I stretch forth my hands unto thee:
My soul *thirsteth* after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.

3, 4. The reason for his prayer. The extremity of his present sufferings seems to be a proof that God is calling him to account and punishing him for his sins with strict severity.

3. Cp. vii. 5; lxxxviii. 3—6. The last line agrees verbatim with Lam. iii. 6.

in darkness] **In dark places**, as lxxxviii. 6, probably a figure for calamity, in which he is as it were buried alive. But it is possible (cp. cxlii. 7) that he was actually a prisoner.

as those that have been long dead] And so are forgotten alike by God and man (lxxxviii. 5). But the meaning may be *those who are dead for ever*, who will never return to life; lit. *dead of eternity*, cp. Jer. li. 39, 'sleep of eternity' = perpetual sleep; Eccl. xii. 5, 'house of eternity' = perpetual abode.

4. And my spirit has fainted upon me;
My heart within me is appalled.

my spirit &c.] Cp. cxlii. 3, note.

is desolate] Rather, **is appalled**, stupefied and paralysed at the apparent hopelessness of my position. Cp. Dan. viii. 27. "The root-idea of the word seems to have been *to be motionless*,—sometimes in the stillness of desolation, sometimes through amazement" (Driver on Dan. iv. 19).

5, 6. The thought of all that God wrought in ancient times makes him long for a fresh manifestation of His power.

5. Cp. lxxvii. 5, 11, 12. The recollection of God's wonderful works of old time deepens his despondency, as he ponders on the contrast; "a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things": yet it emboldens him to fresh prayer.

thy works...the work of thy hands] **Thy work...the doing of thy hands**, as in xcii. 4.

6. *I stretch forth*] R.V. **I spread forth.** Cp. xliv. 20; lxxxviii. 9; Lam. i. 17.

my soul thirsteth for *thee, as a* weary *land*] 'Thirsteth' or some similar verb must be supplied. Cp. lx. 1, from which the words are taken. As the parched land, wearied with long continued drought,

7 Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth:
Hide not thy face from me,
Lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.
8 Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning;
For in thee do I trust:
Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk;
For I lift up my soul unto thee.
9 Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies:
I flee unto thee to hide me.
10 Teach me to do thy will; for thou *art* my God:
Thy spirit *is* good; lead me into the land of uprightness.

longs for refreshing rain, so he longs for a renewal of the old manifestation of God's goodness. Cp. lxviii. 9, note, for rain as an emblem of Divine blessing.

7—12. Prayer for speedy hearing, for guidance and deliverance, for the destruction of his enemies. The language is borrowed almost entirely from older Psalms.

7. From lxix. 17; cii. 2; xxvii. 9; lxxxiv. 2; xxviii. 1.

Hear me speedily] R.V. Make haste to answer me.

hide not &c.] For if God withdraws the light of His Presence, he will be like the dying or the dead.

8. *Cause me to hear* &c.] Possibly we should change a letter, and read as in xc. 14 satisfy me (הַשְׂבִּיעֵנִי for הַשְׁמִיעֵנִי).

in the morning] Let the dawn speedily end this dark night of calamity, and bring the sunshine of Thy lovingkindness to gladden my weary heart. Cp. xxx. 5; xlix. 14.

for in thee do I trust...for I lift up my soul unto thee] Cp. xxv. 2, 1.

cause me to know &c.] Teach me how to avoid the dangers which beset me (cxlii. 3), and to order my conduct according to Thy Will (1 Thess. iv. 1). Cp. xxv. 4; xxxii. 8; Ex. xxxiii. 13.

9. *Deliver me...from mine enemies*] As lix. 1; cp. xxxi. 15; cxlii. 6.

I flee unto thee to hide me] The general sense is probably right, though it can hardly be got out of the present text. The Heb. verb denotes *to cover* or *conceal*, but not *to hide* (intransitively). Some commentators suppose that *unto thee have I covered* may mean 'unto thee have I secretly confided my cause': others think that it may bear the sense given by the A.V. Neither explanation is satisfactory, and probably we should read, with the change of a single letter (חכתי for כסתי), *unto thee have I fled for refuge.* So the LXX *πρός σε κατέφυγον.*

10. *Teach me to do thy will*] Cp. xxv. 4, 5; xl. 8.

for thou art *my God*] Cp. xxxi. 14, and often; cxl. 6.

thy spirit is *good; lead me into the land of uprightness*] Better, though the construction is grammatically anomalous, let thy good spirit lead me in a level land. Cp. Neh. ix. 20, "Thou gavest also thy good

Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake:
For thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble. 11
And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, 12
And destroy all them that afflict my soul:
For I *am* thy servant.

spirit to instruct them." The geographical term 'level land' or 'plain country' (Deut. iv. 43) is here metaphorically applied to denote conditions of life free from the dangers and obstacles which now beset the Psalmist. Cp. xxvi. 12. Perhaps however we should read with the change of a single letter (בְּאֹרַח for בְּאֶרֶץ) *in a level path*, as in xxvii. 11. Cp. Is. xxvi. 7, "The path for the righteous is plain: straight and level thou makest the way of the righteous."

11, 12. The Psalmist's confidence that God will deliver His servant. The verbs in these last two verses should be rendered as futures not imperatives.

11. For thy name's sake, Jehovah, wilt thou quicken me;
In thy righteousness wilt thou bring my soul out of distress:
12. And in thy lovingkindness wilt thou cut off my enemies,
And destroy all them that distress my soul,
For I am thy servant.

The prayer for 'life' is characteristic of Ps. cxix: see note on p. 705: cp. cxxxviii. 7. The plea *for thy name's sake* is found in xxv. 11, and often elsewhere. With *thou wilt bring my soul out of distress* cp. cxlii. 7.

12. Cp. liv. 5, "Cut them [my enemies] off in thy truth"; xciv. 23. Such a prayer breathes the spirit of the Old Testament and not of the Gospel. It is a harsh and discordant conclusion to a Psalm full of humble penitence, patient resignation, and persevering faith. But the enemies who are relentlessly persecuting Jehovah's servant to the death are the enemies of Jehovah; they are traitors to His kingdom who have forfeited their right to live: they give no quarter and deserve none themselves; if they triumph, Jehovah's faithfulness to His promises would seem to have failed and his lovingkindness to have been exhausted or defeated (lxxvii. 8, 9). For such hardened and impenitent offenders nothing remains but extermination.

for I am thy servant] And therefore entitled to claim Thy protection. Cp. *v.* 2; lxxxvi. 2, 4, 16; cxix. 17, and often.

PSALM CXLIV.

1. The Psalmist praises Jehovah as the Giver of victory (1, 2), and marvels that He Who is so great should condescend to care for man who is so insignificant and transitory (3, 4). He prays that Jehovah will appear and interpose on his behalf, for he is hard pressed by faithless and treacherous foreigners (5—8).

ii. A vow of thanksgiving for the victory which he is confident will be granted, and a repeated prayer for deliverance (9—11).

iii. A description of the peace and prosperity of Jehovah's people (12—15).

This Psalm is a compilation from Pss xviii, viii, xxxix, civ, xxxiii, and apparently from some poem which has not been preserved. *Vv.* 12—15 might no doubt have been written by the compiler himself; but the general character of the Psalm, and the looseness of the connexion with the preceding verses make it tolerably certain that these verses also were borrowed.

The Psalm bears the name of David, partly perhaps from its similarity to Ps. xviii, and partly from the mention of David in *v.* 10. The LXX adds *against Goliath* to the title: comp. the Targum of *v.* 10, "from the evil sword of Goliath." But the compilatory character of the Psalm stamps it as a secondary production; and certain features in the language (especially in *vv.* 12—15) point to a late date. In *vv.* 1—11 some leader of the people speaks as its representative; in *vv.* 12—15 he associates his fellow-citizens with himself, and uses the first person plural.

A Psalm of David.

144 Blessed *be* the LORD my strength,
Which teacheth my hands to war,
And my fingers to fight:
2 My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer;
My shield, and *he* in whom I trust;

1, 2. Praise of Jehovah the Giver of victory.

1. *Blessed* be **Jehovah my rock**] From xviii. 46.

which teacheth my hands to war, and *my fingers to fight*] An expansion of xviii. 34 *a*. *Hands* and *fingers* are a common parallelism, but possibly *fingers* may refer particularly to the use of the bow. Cp. xviii. 34 *b*.

2. Cp. xviii. 2, 47, and notes there.

My goodness] Rather, **my lovingkindness**. a bold expression for *the God of my lovingkindness* (lix. 10, 17), to denote Jehovah as the sum and source of lovingkindness. A partial parallel may be found in Jonah ii. 8, but in view of the fact that the verse is almost wholly derived from Ps. xviii, it seems not improbable that we should read as in xviii. 1, *my strength* (חזקי for חסדי), or as in xviii. 2, *my cliff* (סלעי), which agrees better with the next epithet *my fortress* or **stronghold**.

my deliverer] Lit. *my deliverer for me*, as in 2 Sam. xxii. 2. In Ps. xviii *for me* is omitted.

my shield, and he *in whom* **I have taken refuge**] A somewhat awkward variation from the text in Ps. xviii, "my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield."

Who subdueth my people under me.

LORD, what *is* man, that thou takest knowledge of him? 3
Or the son of man, that thou makest account of him?
Man is like to vanity: 4
His days *are* as a shadow that passeth away.
Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down: 5
Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.
Cast forth lightning, and scatter them: 6
Shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them.
Send thine hand from above; 7
Rid me, and deliver me out of great waters,
From the hand of strange children;

who subdueth my people under me] The phrase resembles the text of 2 Sam. xxii. 48 (*who bringeth down*) more closely than that of Ps. xviii. 47 (*and led subject*, a different word from that used here). Instead of *my people* both texts read *peoples*, which is supported by some MSS and several Versions (Aq. Syr. Jer. Targ.) here. If Israel is the speaker, this reading must be adopted here, and the reference must be to the subjugation of neighbouring nations: but if the leader of the community is speaking, the more difficult reading 'my people,' which is supported by the LXX, may be right. The reference will then be to his success in overcoming internal dissensions (cp. "the strivings of my people," 2 Sam. xxii. 44) and the establishment of his authority.

3, 4. From the enthusiastic contemplation of Jehovah's goodness the Psalmist turns to reflect upon the character of the object of it. Man's insignificance and transitoriness enhance the marvel of God's gracious care for him.

3. A variation of viii. 4. Cp. 2 Sam. vii. 18.

4. *vanity*] Or, a breath, unsubstantial and evanescent (a different word from that in *vv.* 8, 11). Cp. xxxix. 5, 11; lxii. 9.

his days &c.] Cp. cii. 11; cix. 23; Job viii. 9; Eccl. vi. 12.

5—8. Prayer that God will appear in His majesty and deliver the Psalmist from his treacherous enemies.

5. The descriptions of xviii. 9, civ. 32 are turned into prayer.

6 **Lighten lightning, and scatter them:**
Send forth thine arrows, and discomfit them.

A variation of xviii. 14, corresponding again more closely to the text of 2 Sam. xxii. 15. *Them* must refer to the enemies who are in the Psalmist's mind, though he has not expressly mentioned them.

7. **Stretch forth thine hands from on high:**
Rescue me, and deliver me out of many waters, out of the hand of strangers.

From xviii. 16, 45, description being again changed to prayer. For *hands* some MSS and all Ancient Versions read *hand*. The word ren-

8 Whose mouth speaketh vanity,
And their right hand *is* a right hand of falsehood.
9 I will sing a new song unto thee, O God:
Upon a psaltery *and* an instrument of ten strings will I sing *praises* unto thee.
10 *It is he* that giveth salvation unto kings:
Who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.
11 Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children,
Whose mouth speaketh vanity,
And their right hand *is* a right hand of falsehood:

dered *rescue* is a word used in this sense only here and in *vv.* 10, 11 in the O.T., but common in Aramaic. It is an indication of the late date of the Psalm. *Great waters* are a figure for overwhelming dangers, here particularly the attacks of foreign enemies, or possibly the tyranny of foreign rulers.

8. *vanity*] i.e. falsehood: cp. xii. 2; xli. 6.

their right hand &c.] Uplifted in swearing a solemn oath. Cp. cvi. 26.

9—11. A promise to give thanks for the victory which he is confident will be granted, and a repetition of his prayer for deliverance.

9. From xxxiii. 2, 3.

O God] An imitation of the usage of the Elohistic Psalms of Books II and III. Nowhere else in Books IV, V is *Elohim* (God) used absolutely for Jehovah except in Ps. cviii, which is directly taken from two Elohistic Psalms. See *Introd.* p. lv.

upon a psaltery and *an instrument of ten strings*] R.V. upon a psaltery of ten strings.

10. Cp. xviii. 50. *Who giveth salvation* (or *victory*) *unto kings* may be meant as a general truth not to be limited to Israel only (cp. xxxiii. 16), and *David his servant* may denote the typical ruler of Jehovah's people (cp. Ezek. xxxiv. 23); or the reference may be historical, *who* gave *victory...who* rescued *David*.

the hurtful (lit. *evil*) *sword*] i.e. from the calamity of war. The Targ. renders 'the evil sword of Goliath,' but the reference is quite general.

11. The repetition of the prayer of *vv.* 7, 8 follows naturally upon the mention of Jehovah's attributes in *v.* 10.

12—15. A description of the prosperity of Israel under the protection and blessing of Jehovah. Cp. generally Deut. xxviii. 2 ff.; xxx. 9.

The absolute dependence of the earlier verses upon existing Psalms makes it probable that these verses also are borrowed, though the poem from which they were taken is not preserved; and the absence of a clear grammatical connexion with the preceding verses makes this probability almost a certainty.

What the compiler intended the connexion to be (for considering the general character of the Psalm we need not doubt that he appended them himself) is much disputed.

That our sons *may be* as plants grown up in their youth ; 12
That our daughters *may be* as corner stones, polished
after the similitude of a palace :
That our garners *may be* full, affording all manner of 13
store :

(1) The LXX (followed of course by the Vulg.) changes the pronouns to the third person, and makes *vv.* 12—14 describe the temporal prosperity of the enemies of Israel referred to in *v.* 11. "Whose mouth hath spoken vanity...whose sons are as young plants &c." *V.* 15 then describes the contrast between this temporal happiness and the true spiritual happiness which Israel possesses. 'Men call the people happy who have these things; (but truly) happy is the people whose God is the Lord.' This however can only be regarded as a conjectural alteration, and not as the true reading.

(2) It is possible to render, *He whose sons*, or (R.V.) *When our sons* &c., and to take *v.* 15 as the apodosis, but such a lengthy protasis as the whole of *vv.* 12—14 is awkward.

(3) The A.V., which follows Aq., Symm. and Jer., may give the right meaning. The goal to which the Psalmist looks forward as the end of deliverance from enemies is the happiness and prosperity of the nation. No doubt the construction is harsh, but it may be explained by the supposition that the Psalmist borrowed the description in *vv.* 12—14, and tacked it loosely on to the rest of his poem by the particle of relation or conjunction *asher*, without altering the construction of the passage to suit it.

12. *That our sons* may be like plants well grown in their youth] Cp. cxxviii. 3. *Plant* denotes a freshly planted sapling sending up its young shoots. LXX *νεόφυτα*, cp. Job xiv. 9. Vergil uses a similar comparison (*Aen.* IX. 674), "Abietibus iuvenes patriis et montibus aequos."

The word for *well-grown*, which may be used either of children (Is. i. 2, *nourished*) or of trees (Is. xliv. 14), is to be connected with *plants*; *in their youth* belongs to *sons*.

our daughters...like corner pillars sculptured in the fashion of a palace] The exact meaning is uncertain. If this rendering is right, it is natural to think of the *Caryatides*, the graceful female figures so commonly employed as columns in Greek architecture. 'Tall and stately' would be the ideas suggested by the comparison. But, as Delitzsch points out, the architecture of Syria and Palestine has never employed *Caryatides* either in ancient or modern times. On the other hand the corners of the large rooms in the houses of wealthy Orientals are commonly ornamented with carved work richly coloured and gilded. He would render *like richly coloured corners*, and supposes that the comparison refers to the bright dresses and rich ornaments worn by the women. Cp. 2 Sam. i. 24. This explanation is however less natural.

13. *all manner of store*] Lit. *from kind to kind*, every kind of produce. The word is an indication of the late date of the Psalm. It

That our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets:

14 *That* our oxen *may be* strong to labour;
That there be no breaking in, nor going out;
That *there be* no complaining in our streets.

15 Happy *is that* people, that is in such a case:
Yea, happy *is that* people, whose God *is* the LORD.

occurs elsewhere in the Heb. of the O.T. only in 2 Chron. xvi. 14; Ecclus. (Heb.) xxxviii. 28; xlix. 8 (?), but is common in Aramaic.

in our streets] Rather, **in our fields.**

14. *our oxen...strong to labour*] Both words are of uncertain meaning. (1) Most commentators follow the Ancient Versions in regarding the word *alluphīm* here as a variant form for *elōphim*, 'oxen' or 'cattle.' Oxen, it is thought, are naturally mentioned after sheep. The participle *m'subbālim* is variously explained. As it is passive in form it can hardly mean *capable of bearing burdens*, *strong to labour* (A.V.); and as it is masculine, it can hardly mean *laden with young, pregnant*. It is not a natural expression for *fat* and *strong*, as the LXX, Aq., Symm. and Jerome render it, i.e. loaded with flesh. Most probably it means **well laden** (R.V.) with the produce of the fields which they draw home in carts.

(2) *Alluphīm* however may mean *chieftains* (cp. Zech. xii. 5, 6), and in Ezra vi. 3 the verb in Aramaic appears to mean *set up* or *firmly established*. In such a late Psalm it is quite possible that the word might be used in the sense it bears in Aramaic (cp. the word for *rescue* in *v.* 7), and the meaning *our chieftains firmly established* suits the context very well. It is of course to be connected with the remainder of the verse, and not with *v.* 13. If the leaders of the community are strong and their authority well established, the community will be in less danger of attacks from without.

no breaking in] No hostile invasion of the country: or, **no breach in the city walls by which the enemy may enter** (Neh. vi. 1).

nor going out] No *going forth* to surrender to the enemy (Am. iv. 3; 2 Kings xxiv. 12), or into captivity (Jer. xxix. 16): or no *sallying forth* to repel an attacking force.

no complaining in our streets] No *outcry* of citizens surprised by the enemy, or generally, no *cry of mourning* for disaster (Jer. xiv. 2; xlvi. 12), in our *broad places* (Jer. v. 1), the open space inside the city gates, which was the usual place of concourse for the citizens, where justice was administered, and business transacted.

15. Happy is the people of Jehovah's choice, to whom He shews such manifest tokens of His favour in temporal prosperity; and yet more truly happy are they in the spiritual blessing of having Jehovah for their God. He is the source and sum of all true happiness, temporal and eternal.

The second line is from xxxiii. 12, with the substitution of the later form of the relative pronoun *sh* for *asher*. See note on p. 739.

PSALM CXLV.

This noble doxology worthily heads the series of Psalms of praise with which the "Book of Praises" ends. "Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever," is the thought which it expands. It is addressed to Israel's God as the supreme King, whose kingdom is universal and eternal; it celebrates His majesty, greatness, and goodness; His providential care for all His creation; His constant love towards those who love and fear Him. Its most striking feature is its universalism. If Israel begins the chorus of praise (*v.* 1) it will not be content until all mankind join in it (*v.* 21). Jehovah's goodness embraces all His creation; and the whole of creation responds with its hymn of praise.

The speaker is Israel; or at any rate the Psalmist so completely identifies himself with the whole nation as to lose sight of the limitations of his own individual personality. The unceasing praise contemplated in *vv.* 1—4 is that of the nation, in which as one generation passes away, another takes up the strain to hand it on in turn to its successor.

The Psalms of this group (cxlv—cl) were evidently composed for liturgical use. They are connected by many similarities of thought and language, and probably belong to the same period. The Maccabaean age, to which Ps. cxlix has very commonly been referred, is excluded by the fact that, according to the newly-discovered Hebrew text of Ecclesiasticus (see p. 776), Pss. cxlvii and cxlviii were known to the author, and must at the latest be older than B.C. 180. The clearest indications of date seem to be furnished by Ps. cxlvii, which may have been written for the Dedication of the walls of Jerusalem under Nehemiah; and allusions in Ps. cxlvi may also be explained from the circumstances of that period. To this date then the whole group may best be referred. The times of Simon ben Johanan described in Ecclus. l. might also be suggested as a possible date, whether Simon I (B.C. 310—291) or Simon II (B.C. 219—199) is meant; but our knowledge of that period is extremely scanty.

For details see the introduction to each Psalm.

This is the only Psalm which bears the title *Tehillāh*, 'a Praise,' from which the Hebrew title of the whole Psalter *Tehillim*, 'Praises' is derived. It is alphabetic in form, each verse of two lines beginning with a letter of the alphabet in regular order (see *Introd.* p. lxiv). The verse beginning with *Nūn* is wanting between *vv.* 13 and 14. It may have been omitted by the poet for some special reason, but hardly for that which the Talmud (*Berachoth* 4 *b*) assigns, viz. that the ill-omened words of Am. v. 2, "Fallen is the daughter of Israel," begin with *Nūn*. More probably it was accidentally lost. A *Nūn* verse is found in the LXX, but its genuineness is disputed. See notes on *v.* 13.

This Psalm has naturally been largely used for liturgical purposes. It is recited twice in the Daily Morning Service and once in the Evening Service of the synagogue. It is said in the Talmud (*Berachoth* 4 *b*) that "Whoever repeats it three times a day may be sure

that he is a child of the world to come." It was the Psalm at the midday meal in the ancient Church, and *vv.* 15, 16 form part of the grace which has been used in colleges for centuries. St Chrysostom speaks of the use of it in the Eucharistic service, especially on account of *v.* 15 (Bingham, *Antiq.* XV. v. 10). It is one of the Proper Psalms for Whitsunday: and it is especially appropriate for that festival, as celebrating the universality and eternity of the kingdom of God.

David's *Psalm of* praise.

145 (א) I will extol thee, my God, O king;
And I will bless thy name for ever and ever.
2 (ב) Every day will I bless thee;
And I will praise thy name for ever and ever.
3 (ג) Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
And his greatness *is* unsearchable.
4 (ד) One generation shall praise thy works to another.
And shall declare thy mighty acts.

1, 2. Cp. xxx. 1; xxxiv. 1, 3; and generally the doxology in 1 Chron. xxix. 10 ff.

1. *my God, O king*] Or, **my God the King.** He Who is Israel's God is the absolute, universal King. The phrase has a larger meaning than that of Ps. v. 2, *my King and my God.*

for ever and ever] Israel is probably the speaker; and Israel as the people of God is immortal (Hab. i. 12). Generation after generation (*v.* 4) will take up the unending chorus of praise. If it is an individual who speaks, we must suppose, with Delitzsch, that in his devotion to the eternal King he forgets his own mortality. For it is at least doubtful if, even late in the post-exilic period, the doctrine of a personal immortality of conscious and active blessedness was so clearly developed that the words could have been used originally in the sense in which the Christian uses them now. But, as Del. rightly remarks, the divinely implanted impulse of the soul to find its highest delight in the praise of its Creator is in itself a practical argument for a life after death.

3. There can be no worthier object of praise than Jehovah. The verse re-echoes xlviii. 1 *a*; xcvi. 4 *a*; Job xi. 7 ff.; Is. xl. 28.

greatly to be praised] Better, **exceeding worthy to be praised.** In most editions of the Prayer Book this verse reads *Great is the Lord, and marvellous, worthy to be praised.* The comma after *marvellous* does not appear in the MS annexed as the authoritative copy to the Act of Uniformity of 1662, but was wrongly introduced into the earliest printed copies by the printers, who failed to see that *marvellous* was an adverb, as in xxxi. 23.

4. *shall praise*] R.V. **shall laud,** as the word is a different one from that in *v.* 2. The verbs might be rendered as optatives: *let one generation laud...and declare* &c., but the rendering of the A.V. is preferable.

thy mighty acts] **of deliverance, xx. 6; cvi. 2.**

(ה) I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, 5
And of thy wondrous works.
(ו) And *men* shall speak of the might of thy terrible 6
acts:
And I will declare thy greatness.
(ז) They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great 7
goodness,
And shall sing of thy righteousness.

(ח) The LORD *is* gracious, and full of compassion; 8
Slow to anger, and of great mercy.

5. The glorious splendour of thy majesty
And all thy marvellous works shall be my theme.

Splendour, glory, majesty, are the attributes of God as King. Cp. *v.* 12; xxi. 5; civ. 1; xcvi. 6.

For the word rendered *shall be my theme*, lit. *I will busy myself with, discourse concerning*, see note on cv. 2.

thy wondrous works] The Heb. text reads *the matters* or *details* (דִּבְרֵי) *of thy marvellous works* (cp. lxv. 3; cv. 27); but the LXX represents a verb (יְדַבְּרוּ), so that the verse would run, *Of the glorious splendour of thy majesty do men talk, and of all thy marvellous works will I discourse.* This reading improves the rhythm, and makes the structure of the verse correspond exactly to that of *v.* 6. The further alteration of the first person in *vv.* 5*b*, 6*b* to the third in the LXX *they will discourse . they will declare* is unnecessary. *Worship* in P.B.V.=honour. Cf. Luke xiv. 10.

6. Jehovah, Who is "the great, mighty, and terrible God" (Deut. x. 17), manifests Himself not only in 'mighty acts' of deliverance (*v.* 4), but in 'terrible acts' of judgement, which inspire His enemies with terror, and His people with reverence. Cp. lxv. 5. *Might* is a different word from that in *vv.* 4, 12, and may be rendered *strength*, to bring out the connexion of the two words with the epithets *strong and mighty* in xxiv. 8.

thy greatness] So the *Qrē*, as in *v.* 3. But the *K'thībh*, '*great deeds*,' suits the parallelism better. Cp. 1 Chr. xvii. 19, 21 (R.V.).

7. *They shall abundantly utter*] Lit. *pour forth* as a perpetual stream of praise, as in cxix. 171.

thy great goodness] Cp. xxxi. 19; Is. lxiii. 7.

shall joyfully sing *of thy righteousness*] i.e. God's faithfulness to His revealed character. Cp. cxliii. 1, note; li. 14.

8. Taken almost verbatim from Ex. xxxiv. 6, Jehovah's great revelation of Himself as a God of condescending grace and infinite compassion, Whose Will is love, and Whose wrath is only manifested in the last resort against the hardened and impenitent. Cp. ciii. 8; lxxxvi. 15; Joel ii. 13; Jonah iv. 2; Neh. ix. 17, 31.

of great mercy] Lit. *great in lovingkindness.*

9 (ט) The LORD *is* good to all:
And his tender mercies *are* over all his works.
10 (י) All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD;
And thy saints shall bless thee.
11 (כ) They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom,
And talk of thy power;
12 (ל) To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts,
And the glorious majesty of his kingdom.
13 (מ) Thy kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom,
And thy dominion *endureth* throughout all generations.

9. Jehovah is *good to all*] Not merely, as P.B.V., *unto every man*, but as the parallelism of the next line shews, to all creation.

tender mercies] **Compassions.**

10. *All thy works shall* **give thanks unto** *thee*] Responding to Jehovah's goodness and compassion. The works of creation are meant, which bear witness to the sovereignty of their Creator by their obedience to His laws, to His goodness by their manifold beauty, to His greatness by their immeasurable vastness and infinite variety.

thy saints] **Thy beloved**, or, **thy godly ones**; those who are the objects of Thy lovingkindness, or who reflect Thy character in their own. See Appendix, Note I.

11. *thy power*] **Thy might**, as in *vv.* 4, 12.

12. *his mighty acts*] Somewhat awkwardly, to our ideas, the Psalmist passes from the second person to the third. The LXX removes the difficulty by reading the second person; hence, through the Vulg., the P.B.V. "that *thy* power, *thy* glory, and mightiness of *thy* kingdom might be known unto men."

13. This verse is found also, in Aramaic, in Dan. iv. 3, cp. 34 (Aram. iii. 33, iv. 31).

an everlasting kingdom] Lit. a **kingdom of all the ages**, past alike and future. With the LXX *βασιλεια παντων τῶν αἰωνων*, cp. 1 Tim. i. 17 *τῷ βασιλεῖ τῶν αἰώνων*, 'unto the king of the ages.' See also x. 16; xxix. 10; Ex. xv. 18; Jer. x. 10.

throughout all generations] *In* (or *over*) *generation and generation*, each successive generation.

The verse beginning with *Nûn*, which is missing in the Hebrew text, is thus supplied in the LXX and Versions dependent on it, and in the Syr.;

Faithful is the Lord in [all] his words,
And holy in all his works[1].

If this verse is genuine, it must have been lost at an early date, for it is

[1] *πιστὸς Κύριος ἐν* [*πᾶσιν*, ℵ^c a RT] *τοῖς λόγοις αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὅσιος ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ*

The Heb. found in the lower margin of one late Heb. MS

נֶאֱמָן יְהוָה בְּכָל־דְּבָרָיו וְחָסִיד בְּכָל־מַעֲשָׂיו

is probably only a re-translation from the LXX.

(ס) The LORD upholdeth all that fall,
And raiseth up all those that be bowed down.
(ע) The eyes of all wait upon thee; 15
And thou givest them their meat in due season.
(פ) Thou openest thine hand, 16
And satisfiest the desire of every living thing.
(צ) The LORD *is* righteous in all his ways, 17
And holy in all his works.
(ק) The LORD *is* nigh unto all them that call upon him, 18
To all that call upon him in truth.
(ר) He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: 19
He also will hear their cry, and will save them.
(ש) The LORD preserveth all them that love him: 20

not found in any of the later versions[1]. Against its genuineness it is argued that the first line is suggested by the occurrence of the word for 'faithful' (*ne'emān*) in the same position in cxi. 7*b*, and by the language of Deut. vii. 9, and that the second line is simply taken from *v.* 17. It may however be genuine. It is not likely that the *Nūn* verse was originally omitted: it was not necessary for the LXX to supply it: and the Psalm contains many imitations and is not free from repetitions.

14. *all that fall*] Or, *all that are falling.* But cp. xxxvii. 17, 24.

raiseth up] An Aramaic word, found in the Heb. of the O.T. only here and in cxlvi. 8.

15. The picture of God as the great householder distributing their portions to all His household is repeated from civ. 27. Cp. Matt. vi. 26. The next verse also is based upon civ. 28.

16. *satisfiest the desire of every living thing*] This rendering probably gives the right sense. Cp. civ. 28, on which it is based, "thou openest thine hand, they are satisfied with good." Cp. *v.* 19. The word rendered *desire* may however mean the *good will, favour* of God (cvi. 4): hence R.V. marg., *satisfiest every living thing with favour.*

17. *righteous*] True to His character. Cp. *v.* 7.

holy] So the LXX, ὅσιος, which is used of God in the N.T. in Rev. xv. 4; xvi. 5. But the word *chāsīd* as applied to God (here and in Jer. iii. 12 only) means *full of lovingkindness*, loving. See App., Note I.

18. *nigh unto all them that call upon him*] To answer and help. Cp. Deut. iv. 7; Ps. xxxiv. 18; cxix. 151.

in truth] The hypocrite finds no favour with Him. Cp. Is. x. 20; John iv. 23, 24.

19, 20. Fear and love are the inseparable elements of true religion. Fear preserves love from degenerating into presumptuous familiarity: love prevents fear from becoming a servile and cringing dread.

[1] The verse is given in Lagarde's ed. of Jerome's Version: but it is not found in some good MSS and is obelised in others, and is probably an interpolation from the Vulg. with which it agrees exactly.

But all the wicked will he destroy.
21 (ת) My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD:
And let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.

29. *all the wicked will he destroy*] See note on cxliii. 12. The victory of good must ultimately involve the defeat and destruction of evil.

21. Israel's own resolution is fixed; but nothing less can satisfy its aspirations than a universal and unending chorus of praise from all mankind, evoked by the revelation of His absolute and perfect holiness.

PSALM CXLVI.

This Psalm is "the praise of Jehovah as the one true Helper." Israel is warned against putting its trust in men, however powerful they may seem for the moment to be—a warning demanded perhaps by the particular circumstances and tendencies of the time—and reminded of the privileges it enjoys in the guardianship of Jehovah, the celebration of Whose power, beneficence, and eternal dominion forms the main subject of the Psalm.

It is the first of the five 'Hallelujah Psalms' with which the Psalter ends, and it has several points of contact with Psalm cxlv[1].

To this and the three following Psalms (cxlv—cxlviii of LXX = cxlvi—cxlviii of Heb., cxlvii being divided) the LXX prefixes the title *of Haggai and Zechariah*, as it does to Ps. cxxxviii. Whether this title represents some tradition, or was simply a conjecture from the use of these Psalms in the services of the Second Temple, is quite uncertain. They can however hardly be earlier than the time of Nehemiah, to the circumstances of which Ps. cxlvii and *vv.* 3, 4 of this Psalm may refer.

The use of Pss. cxlvi—cl in the daily Morning Service of the Synagogue is of great antiquity, though not, according to Dr Schiller-Szinessy, so ancient as that of Ps. cxlv.

146 Praise ye the LORD.
Praise the LORD, O my soul.
2 While I live will I praise the LORD:
I will sing *praises* unto my God while I have *any* being.

1. *Praise ye* Jah] Hallelujah! See note on civ. 35. The words are omitted in P.B.V. as belonging to the title rather than to the Psalm.

praise Jehovah, *O my soul*] Cp. *Bless Jehovah, O my soul*, ciii. 1, 22; civ. 1, 35. In this and the following verse the worship of the congregation is individualised: the Psalmist speaks for himself, and offers to each worshipper words wherewith to stir himself up to praise, and to express his purpose.

2. Almost identical with civ. 33.

[1] Cp. *v.* 2 with cxlv. 2; *vv.* 5, 7 with cxlv. 15; *v.* 8 with cxlv. 14; *v.* 10 with cxlv. 13.

Put not your trust in princes, 3
Nor in the son of man, in whom *there is* no help.
His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; 4
In that *very* day his thoughts perish.
Happy *is he* that *hath* the God of Jacob for his help, 5
Whose hope *is* in the LORD his God:
Which made heaven, and earth, 6
The sea, and all that therein is:
Which keepeth truth for ever:
Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: 7
Which giveth food to the hungry.

3. 4. The central thought of the Ps., expressed in *vv.* 5 ff., is prefaced by a warning against the temptation to rely upon the favour and protection of men, however powerful. Princes to-day, they may be dust to-morrow; and their loftiest schemes crumble into dust with them.

3. Cp. cxviii. 8, 9, and see notes there for illustration of the kind of circumstances which may have suggested the warning. Cp. also Jer. xvii. 5 ff. Heathen princes doubtless are meant. It is possible that a party in Jerusalem was advocating a foreign alliance.

in whom there is *no help*] Or, *salvation*. Cp. xxxiii. 16; lx. 11 (=cviii. 12) and note.

4. Cp. Ps. civ. 29; Is. ii. 22.

to his earth] The 'ground' (*ădāmāh*) from which he was taken and of which his name (*ādām*='man') reminds him.

his thoughts] Or, *purposes*. The word is common in Aramaic, but occurs here only in the Heb. of the O.T.

The author of 1 Macc. appears to have had both this passage and civ. 29 in his mind when he wrote (ii. 63), "To-day he will be exalted, and to-morrow he will not be found, because he is returned to his dust, and his thought is perished."

5. **Happy is he, whose help is the God of Jacob;**
Whose hope resteth upon Jehovah his God.

Cp. xxxiii. 22; cxliv. 15; xx. 1. The word for *hope* is Aramaic, and is found elsewhere only in cxix. 116: the cognate verb is used in cxlv. 15 (A.V. *wait*).

6. The omnipotence and faithfulness of Jehovah are contrasted with the frailty and transitoriness of man (*vv.* 3, 4). For similar references to the power of Jehovah manifested in creation as a ground for trusting Him see cxxi. 2; cxxiv. 8; cp. Neh. ix. 6; Acts iv. 24.

all that in them *is*] In heaven and earth and sea; all being wherever found. Cp. Ex. xx. 11.

7. Illustrations of Jehovah's beneficent action, not without allusion to the circumstances of Israel. Observe how these Divine works were literally manifested in Christ's miracles. 7 *a* is abbreviated from ciii. 6; with 7 *b* cp. cvii. 9.

The LORD looseth the prisoners:
8 The LORD openeth *the eyes of* the blind:
The LORD raiseth them that are bowed down:
The LORD loveth the righteous:
9 The LORD preserveth the strangers;
He relieveth the fatherless and widow:
But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.
10 The LORD shall reign for ever,
Even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.
Praise ye the LORD.

the LORD &c.] Five times the name of Jehovah stands emphatically at the beginning of the line, to shew that it is He and no other Who does all these things. Prison may be a figure for exile, or for suffering generally (cp. cvii. 10, 14). Releasing from prison and giving sight to the blind are coupled together in Is. xlii. 7; lxi. 1, "to prisoners opening of eyes."

8. Blindness is a figure for moral and spiritual ignorance and insensibility, and helplessness in general. Cp. Is. xxix. 18: xxxv. 5; Deut. xxviii. 29; Job xii. 25; Is. lix. 9, 10.

raiseth **up** *them that are bowed down*] As cxlv. 14.

loveth] And therefore, as P.B.V., *careth for* them. But is not this an accidental mistake, introduced into the Great Bible of 1540? Coverdale (1535) and the Great Bible of 1539 have *loveth*.

9. As in xciv. 6 **the sojourners**[1] or resident aliens who had no rights of citizenship, **orphans**, and widows are typical examples of defencelessness. They are therefore specially under Jehovah's protection, and are commended in the Law to the care of the Israelites.

relieveth] R.V. **upholdeth.**

turneth upside down] Lit. as R.V. marg., *maketh crooked*; turns aside from its goal, so that it leads to destruction. Cp. i. 6. That which they would fain do to innocent men (cxix. 78) He does to them.

10. Cp. Ex. xv. 18. Such is Jehovah, Zion's God: and His reign is eternal, not transitory, like the dominion of earthly princes (*vv.* 3, 4). **Cp. cxlv. 13.**

PSALM CXLVII.

This spirited Psalm of praise for the restoration of Jerusalem consists of three divisions, each beginning with a fresh call to praise.

i. Praise Jehovah the Restorer of Jerusalem, the omnipotent and omniscient Ruler of the universe, the moral Governor of the world (1—6).

[1] The LXX regularly renders *gēr*, 'sojourner,' by προσήλυτος: but this does not mean 'proselyte' in the later technical sense of "a Gentile who through circumcision and observance of the law had been admitted into full religious fellowship with Israel," but, as the Vulg. renders it here, 'advena.' See Schürer's *Hist. of Jewish People*, § 31, E. T. II. ii. 315.

ii. Praise Him for His beneficent Providence towards all His creatures, and acknowledge that He delights not in physical strength but in reverent trust (7—11).

iii. Praise Him for peace and prosperity. He who controls the forces of Nature has given Israel the revelation of His law which distinguishes it from every other nation (12—20).

The thoughts of Jehovah's special goodness to Israel, of His power and beneficence manifested in Nature, and of His moral government of the world are intertwined. As in the other Psalms of this group, thoughts and language are largely borrowed, especially from Ps. xxxiii, Isaiah xl ff., and Job; but they are recast into a new and vigorous song, breathing the spirit of hearty thanksgiving evoked by some special event. It must have been written at a time when Jerusalem was enjoying special tokens of the restoration of Jehovah's favour; and it is a not improbable conjecture that it was composed for the Festival of the Dedication of the walls of Jerusalem celebrated by Nehemiah (Neh. xii. 27–43). After the completion of the walls of Jerusalem Nehemiah summoned the Levites settled in the neighbourhood to assemble at Jerusalem. The Priests and Levites purified themselves, and then purified the people, and the gates, and the wall. Two processions were formed of the Priests and Levites with the princes of Judah: one accompanied by Ezra went to the right, the other accompanied by Nehemiah went to the left. On the east of the city the processions met, and went to the Temple, where sacrifices were offered in the midst of general rejoicings.

Whether the Psalm was composed for this or for some similar occasion at a later time, for example in the high-priesthood of Simon ben Johanan, who, like a second Nehemiah, restored the walls of Jerusalem (Ecclus. l. 4), cannot be decided, but at any rate it may serve to illustrate the feelings of the time. Neh. ix. 5, 6 is in full accord with the spirit of this group of Psalms.

In the LXX the Psalm is divided into two; *vv.* 1—11 forming cxlvi, and 12—20 forming cxlvii, in the LXX numbering; and the title ***Alleluia; of Haggai and Zechariah,*** is prefixed to both.

Praise ye the LORD: **147**
For *it is* good to sing *praises* unto our God;
For *it is* pleasant; *and* praise is comely.

1—6. Praise Jehovah, the restorer of Israel, the sovereign ruler of the world.

1. The text of this verse seems to be in some confusion. The *Hallelujah*, which ought, as in the other Psalms of this group, to stand by itself as the summons of the precentor to the congregation (see on civ. 35), here forms part of *v.* 1, the construction of which is otherwise awkward and anomalous. The LXX reads both *Alleluia* and *Praise ye the Lord*, as in cxlviii. 1; and it is probable that the verse should read thus:

Hallelujah.
Praise ye Jehovah, for it is good:

2 The LORD doth build up Jerusalem:
He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.
3 He healeth the broken in heart,
And bindeth up their wounds.
4 He telleth the number of the stars;
He calleth them all *by their* names.
5 Great *is* our Lord, and of great power:
His understanding *is* infinite.

Make melody to our God, for it is pleasant;
Praise is comely.

or, **for he is good...he is gracious** (lit. *pleasant*, cp. xxvii. 4). Cp. cxxxv. 3, on which this verse is based: line 3 is from xxxiii. 1.

2, 3. Jehovah's goodness to Jerusalem.

doth build up] The restoration and repeopling of the city generally are meant, not merely the reconstruction of its houses and walls. It is regarded as a continuous process, still in progress.

he gathereth together &c.] Cp. Deut. xxx. 1—4; Is. lvi. 8; xi. 12; Neh. i. 9.

This verse is imitated in the hymn in the Hebrew text of Ecclesiasticus li. 12 (6, 7). See p. 776.

3. Cp. Is. lxi. 1; Hos. vi. 1. Israel, crushed with grief and despair, wounded with sorrow and shame in its exile, is meant. Nehemiah's feelings (i. 4; ii. 3) represent those of every true Israelite. Cp. Ps. cxxxvii. Possibly the further thought is implied that sorrow had wrought contrition (li. 17) and made restoration possible.

4, 5. An imitation of Is. xl. 26, 28. Jehovah's omniscience and omnipotence are partly a ground for praise, partly an encouragement to trust Him. Cp. cxlvi. 6. He who knows each separate star will not lose sight of one single Israelite.

He telleth &c.] Either simply, **he counteth the number of the stars**, which to man seem innumerable (Gen. xv. 5): or, **he appointeth a number for the stars**, i.e. as in Is. xl. 26, "he bringeth out their host by number," marshals them in order like a well disciplined army.

he calleth them all by their *names*] **He giveth them all names**; i.e. He knows them individually. The original passage in Is. xl. 26, "calleth them all by name," taken in connexion with the preceding clause, means rather that He summons them as the soldiers of an army are summoned when the roll is called.

5. *Great* is *our Lord, and* **abundant** *in power*] The language is borrowed from **Is. xl. 26.**

his understanding is *infinite*] Lit. *to his understanding there is no number*, it is incalculable. *Number* is substituted for *searching* of Is. xl. 28, perhaps to suggest a contrast to *v.* 5. He numbers the stars: His wisdom cannot be numbered. The Heb. of Ecclus. xxxix. 20 "Is there any *number* [i.e. limit] to his salvation" [or according to Schechter's conjecture, *understanding*] may be borrowed from this passage.

The LORD lifteth up the meek: 6
He casteth the wicked down to the ground.
Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; 7
Sing *praise* upon the harp unto our God:
Who covereth the heaven with clouds, 8
Who prepareth rain for the earth,
Who maketh grass to grow *upon* the mountains.
He giveth to the beast his food, 9
And to the young ravens which cry.
He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: 10
He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man.
The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, 11
In those that hope in his mercy.

6. Jehovah's power is manifested in His moral government of the world. Cp. cxlvi. 9. Though the language is general, it has obviously a special reference to the restoration of Israel and the humiliation of their oppressors.

lifteth up] Or as R.V. upholdeth, the same word as in cxlvi. 9.

the meek] Those who have learnt humility in the school of suffering.

casteth...down] Or, abaseth.

7—11. A renewed call to praise Jehovah for His beneficence, and to recognise the conditions of His favour.

7. *sing* praise] Make melody unto our God with harp, as xcviii. 5 *a*.

8. Cp. civ. 13, 14.

upon *the mountains*] Without man's care and cultivation.

The LXX adds καὶ χλόην τῇ δουλείᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων from civ. 14, Vulg. 'herbam servituti hominum,' which appears in P.B.V. as *and herb for the use of men*.

9. Cp. cxlv. 15; Job xxxviii. 41; Luke xii. 24. Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 200, denies that there is any foundation for the notion that the raven turns its young out of the nest at so early a period that they are unable to provide for themselves. Perhaps the raven's croak struck the Psalmist especially as an importunate cry.

10, 11. Based upon xxxiii. 16—18. Jehovah's delight is not in physical strength, but in reverent trustfulness;—a thought of consolation, parallel to *v.* 6. Israel might look regretfully back to its ancient military power, or envy the forces of neighbouring nations; but it is by spiritual strength that its victories are to be won. The horse is the warhorse (Job xxxix. 19): the man is the warrior, for whom strength and swiftness of foot were indispensable qualifications. Cp. xx. 7; xviii. 33; Am. ii. 14, 15: and the standing epithet in Homer for Achilles, "swift of foot."

11. *those that hope in his mercy*] Or, *those that wait for his loving-kindness*.

12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem;
Praise thy God, O Zion.
13 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates;
He hath blessed thy children within thee.
14 He maketh peace *in* thy borders,
And filleth thee *with* the finest of the wheat.
15 He sendeth forth his commandment *upon* earth:
His word runneth very swiftly.
16 He giveth snow like wool:
He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes.
17 He casteth forth his ice like morsels:
Who can stand before his cold?
18 He sendeth out his word, and melteth them:
He causeth his wind to blow, *and* the waters flow.
19 He sheweth his word unto Jacob,
His statutes and his judgments unto Israel.
20 He hath not dealt so with any nation:

12—20. Zion is summoned to praise Jehovah for the blessings of peace and prosperity. The Lord of Nature is He Who has endowed Israel with unique privileges.

12. *Praise the* LORD] **Laud Jehovah.**
thy God, O Zion] As cxlvi. 10.

13. *he hath strengthened*] The same word is used in Neh. iii. 4 ff. of *repairing* or fortifying the wall and gates. All through Nehemiah's narrative appears the conviction that "this work was wrought of our God."
the bars of thy gates] There may be a particular reference to Neh. iii. 3, 6, 13, 14, 15.
thy children] Zion is regarded as the mother of its inhabitants.

14. satisfieth *thee* with *the* fat *of wheat*] Fulfilling His ancient promises. Cp. lxxxi. 16; Deut. xxxii. 14.

15, 16. A reminiscence of Is. lv. 10, 11. As in cvii. 20 the Word or command of God is personified. The word for *commandment* (lit. 'saying') is cognate with the verb *spake* in xxxiii. 9; Gen. i. 3, &c.

16. "Snow must always have been rare in Central and Southern Palestine," and "frost is very rare at Jerusalem." Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 28. They would therefore be more striking phenomena than they are to us; and it has been plausibly suggested that the Psalm was composed in or after an exceptionally severe winter.

17. *his ice like morsels*] Hail, like fragments or crumbs of bread.

19, 20. Cp. Deut. iv. 7, 8. The Lord, whose word all Nature obeys, has given Israel His word in the law; a privilege which distinguishes it from every other nation.

And *as for his* judgments, they have not known them.
Praise ye the LORD.

judgments] Or, *ordinances*.

PSALM CXLVIII.

Israel, rejoicing in the restoration of its national existence, calls heaven and earth to join in a diapason of praise. Let every heavenly being and every heavenly body unite to praise Him Who created them and sustains them (1—6). Let earth with all its phenomena and all its inhabitants praise Him for the revelation of His majesty (7—13). Especially has He given His people ground for praise by restoring them to honour (14).

Thus, though Israel's restoration is only briefly mentioned at the end, it is evidently the motive of the universal call to praise, and the thought that inspires the Psalm is the desire that not only all humanity but all creation should rejoice with Israel. Cp. cxvii. 1, 2. If man is the crown of creation, and Israel is Jehovah's servant for the redemption of humanity, then all things in heaven and earth must rejoice when Israel is raised from humiliation to honour. Cp. Is. xl—lxvi *passim*.

The Psalm implies the significance of Israel's history for the history of the world, and, in view of the unity of all being, for the history of the universe. It should be read in connexion with Rom. viii. 19 ff.; Rev. v. 13.

This Psalm was obviously written for liturgical use, and apparently, as may be inferred from *v.* 14, upon some special occasion. It bears a general resemblance to the other Psalms of the group, and may belong to the same epoch. It is an expansion of cxlv. 10, and *v.* 14 connects it with cxlix. 5, 9. The germ of it is found in Neh. ix. 5, 6. The *Benedicite* or *Song of the Three Holy Children* is based upon it.

Praise ye the LORD. 148
Praise ye the LORD from the heavens:
Praise him in the heights.
Praise ye him, all his angels: 2
Praise ye him, all his hosts.

1—6. Let the heavens and all that is in them praise Jehovah their Creator.

1. *from the heavens*] The anthem of praise is to ring out from heaven above, and to be answered from the earth below (*v.* 7).

in the heights] Of heaven (Job xvi. 19; xxv. 2).

2. Cp. ciii. 20 *a*, 21 *a*. *Hosts* may include both heavenly beings and heavenly bodies, and in Job xxxviii. 7 angels and stars join in praise: but here as in ciii. 21 the angels only seem to be meant (cp. 1 Kings

3 Praise ye him, sun and moon:
Praise him, all ye stars of light.
4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens,
And ye waters that *be* above the heavens.
5 Let them praise the name of the LORD:
For he commanded, and they were created.
6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever:
He hath made a decree which shall not pass.

7 Praise the LORD from the earth,
Ye dragons, and all deeps:

xxii. 19; Neh. ix. 6); the heavenly bodies follow in *v.* 3. The *Q'rē* and all the Versions read the plur. *hosts*: the *K'thīb* has the sing. *host*.

3. *all ye stars of light*] So the Heb. text. P.B.V. *stars and light* follows the LXX (Vulg.).

4. *heavens of heavens*] i.e. the highest heavens. Cp. lxviii. 33; Deut. x. 14; 1 Kings viii. 27 (=2 Chr. vi. 18); 2 Chr. ii. 6; Neh. ix. 6; Ecclus. xvi. 18. It is doubtful whether the idea of a plurality of heavens, three (2 Cor. xii. 2) or seven, which is prominent in later Jewish literature, was already current. See however Salmond in Hastings' *Dict. of the Bible*, II. 321, who thinks that it is implied by this phrase.

ye waters that be *above the heavens*] The great reservoir of waters supposed to exist above the 'firmament,' the source of rain. See Gen. i. 6, 7; Ps. civ. 3.

5. *for HE commanded*] *HE* is emphatically expressed. Cp. xxxiii. 9, whence also comes the addition of the LXX, which is retained in P.B.V., *HE spake the word, and they were made.*

6. And he hath made them stand fast] To Him they owe not only their original creation but their perpetual maintenance. Cp. Ecclus. xliii. 26; Col. i. 17.

he hath made a decree which shall not pass] This rendering, which is that of the LXX (παρελεύσεται) and Jer. (praeteribit) may be defended by Esth. i. 19; ix. 27: but the general usage of the verb and subst. is in favour of the rendering, He hath given (them) a statute which none (of them) shall transgress. The 'law of gravity' and the other 'laws of nature' keep them fixed in their orbits and courses. For *chōq* (something prescribed, an enactment, statute) in the sense of the laws imposed on nature by Jehovah see Jer. xxxi. 35, 36; xxxiii. 25.

7—13. Let earth and all that is therein praise Jehovah for the revelation of His majesty.

7. *dragons, and all deeps*] The sea-monsters of Gen. i. 21, and the depths of ocean which they were supposed to inhabit[1].

[1] Robertson Smith (*Rel. of the Semites*, p. 161) suggests that the *tannīn* is a personification of the waterspout.

Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour;
Stormy wind fulfilling his word:
Mountains, and all hills;
Fruitful trees, and all cedars:
Beasts, and all cattle;
Creeping things, and flying fowl:
Kings of the earth, and all people;
Princes, and all judges of the earth:
Both young men, and maidens;
Old men, and children:
Let them praise the name of the LORD:
For his name alone *is* excellent;
His glory *is* above the earth and heaven.
He also exalteth the horn of his people,
The praise of all his saints;

8. *Fire, and hail*] Lightning and hail are naturally coupled, as hail most commonly falls in thunderstorms. Cp. xviii. 12 ff.

vapour] The word elsewhere means *smoke* (Gen. xix. 28; Ps. cxix. 83); but must here mean the *mists*, which drift like smoke over the mountains.

9. Cp. civ. 16.

10. All kinds of living creatures: animals, wild and tame; reptiles and birds. Cp. Gen. i. 24, 25, 21.

11, 12. Last of all man, as the crown of creation (Gen. i. 26), is summoned to join the chorus, without distinction of rank or age or sex.

all people] **Peoples**, naturally coupled with *kings*.

13. is *excellent*] **Is exalted**, as in Is. xii. 4. On *excellent, excellency*, in A.V. and P.B.V., see note in Driver's *Daniel*, p. 32.

his glory] **His majesty**. Cp. viii. 1; civ. 1; cxlv. 5; Hab. iii. 3.

14. Israel's special ground for praise.

And he hath lifted up a horn for his people] He has once more given to Israel dignity and power. For the metaphor cp. lxxv. 4; lxxxix. 17, 24; xcii. 10, note.

The rendering of P.B.V., *he shall exalt*, is that of the LXX, *ὑψώσει*, and is adopted by some critics. But the tense expresses accomplished fact more naturally than confident anticipation.

the praise of all his saints] Lit. *a praise for all his beloved*; best taken in apposition to the preceding clause to mean that this national restoration is a theme of praise for all the members of the covenant people. The words may however be in apposition to the subject of the verb, and refer to Jehovah: *He...who is the praise* &c.: cp. Deut. x. 21, "He is thy praise." So the LXX, paraphrased in P.B.V., "all his saints shall praise him."

Even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD.

a people near unto him] Jehovah was 'near' to Israel (Deut. iv. 7; Ps. cxlv. 18); and Israel, as "a kingdom of priests" (Ex. xix. 6), stood in a unique relation of nearness to Jehovah. Cp. lxv. 4, note; Num. xvi. 5; Jer. xxx. 21. That relation, which seemed to have been interrupted by the Exile, has now been restored: Jehovah once more dwells in the midst of His people in the city of His choice.

This verse is quoted verbatim in the Hebrew text of Ecclesiasticus li. 12 (15). See p. 777.

PSALM CXLIX.

Another jubilant anthem, in which Israel is exhorted to praise Jehovah its Maker, Who has restored it to a position of dignity and honour (1—4); and a victorious triumph over all the nations of the world is confidently anticipated (5—9). In cxlviii. 11 the nations are summoned to join with Israel in the chorus of universal praise: here their obstinate hostility is represented as doomed to punishment. "That nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted" (Is. lx. 12).

This Psalm has been confidently assigned, and not without good reason, to the Maccabaean period. Religious ardour, united with a consciousness of vigorous strength, national enthusiasm coupled with passionate hatred of national enemies, were, it is pointed out, prominent characteristics of the Maccabaean period. The *chăsīdīm* of the Psalm are supposed to be the Hasidaeans, and in particular the "assembly of the *chăsīdīm*" (*v.* 1) is compared to the "company of the Hasidaeans" mentioned in 1 Macc. ii. 42. It is suggested that the Psalm was composed either for the re-dedication of the Temple in B.C. 165 (1 Macc. iv. 54), or for the rejoicings on the surrender of the Acra in B.C. 142 (1 Macc. xiii. 51).

The Psalm cannot however be separated from the other Psalms of this group, to which it is related in tone and language[1], and evidence has recently come to light, which seems to prove that two at least of these Psalms are earlier than the Maccabaean age. If the newly-discovered Hebrew of Ecclesiasticus preserves the original text, it is unquestionable that Psalms cxlvii, cxlviii were known to the author, and must therefore have been written earlier than the beginning of the second century B.C. In the hymn which follows ch. li. 12 in the Heb. text, though not in the Versions, *vv.* 6, 7, "Give thanks unto him that gathereth the outcasts of Israel, for his lovingkindness endureth for ever. Give thanks unto him that buildeth up his city and his sanctuary, for his lovingkindness endureth for ever," are based upon cxlvii. 2; and *v.* 15 is a verbatim quotation of cxlviii. 14. The hymn is an imitation

[1] Note that, like cxlvii, it is largely dependent on Is. xl—lxvi. See notes on *vv.* 2, 4, 7, 8, 9.

of Ps. cxxxvi (see p. 776), and it is clear from its whole character that Ben Sira has borrowed from the Psalms and not the Psalmists from Ben Sira.

Independently of this evidence the reasons urged in favour of the Maccabaean date are not so conclusive as they at first appear. The militant spirit of the Psalm has been exaggerated; *vv.* 5 ff., even if suggested by some recent success, are in the main no more than an adaptation of the language of prophecy, and may be quite general in their reference, anticipating the speedy approach of Israel's triumph over the nations of the world foretold by the prophets: the *chăsīdīm* of the Psalm are the nation, and not, as in 1 Macc., a particular religious party in it. Moreover, though the argument from silence is precarious, there is nothing in the Psalm to suggest that Israel was in the midst of a life and death struggle for its religion and its very existence.

If now the group is considered as a whole, it is from Ps. cxlvii that the clearest indications of date are to be obtained, and this, as we have seen, may best be assigned to the time of Nehemiah.

The "zealot temper" of the Psalm has been somewhat exaggerated. Still, as Delitzsch points out, its spirit is that of the O.T., not of the N.T., and its standpoint approximates to that of the Book of Esther. "Under the delusion that its language might still be used as a prayer without any spiritual transmutation, it has been made the watchword of the most horrible errors. It was by means of this Psalm that Caspar Scioppius in his 'Clarion of the Sacred War' (*Classicum belli sacri*), written, as Bakius says, not with ink but with blood, fired the Roman Catholic princes to undertake the Thirty Years' War. And within the Protestant Church Thomas Münzer employed it to stir up the flames of the Peasants' War. It is obvious that the Christian cannot make direct use of such a Psalm without ignoring the apostolic warning that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (2 Cor. x. 4)." But the morality of the Psalm must not be measured by the Christian standard. Only by slow degrees could the lesson be learnt, that the conquest of the nations was to be achieved in a nobler way than by force of arms; and it must not be forgotten that even in the Apocalypse the judgement of the enemies of God and His people is a subject for earnest prayer and solemn thanksgiving (vi. 10; xi. 18; xix. 2).

Praise ye the LORD. 149
Sing unto the LORD a new song,
And his praise in the congregation of saints.

1. *Praise ye the LORD*] The liturgical *Hallelujah*. See on civ. 35.
Sing unto Jehovah *a new song*] In acknowledgment of new mercies. Cp. xxxiii. 3; xcvi. 1, note.
his praise in the assembly of the beloved] Cp. xxii. 22, 25; cvii. 32. The P.B.V., *let the congregation of saints praise him*, follows the LXX (Vulg.) and Jer. in adopting a possible but less probable construction, lit. *let his praise be* &c. The title *the beloved* or *godly* (see Appendix, Note I.) is used at the beginning, middle and end of this Psalm to

2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him:
Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.
3 Let them praise his name in the dance:
Let them sing *praises* unto him with the timbrel and harp.
4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people:
He will beautify the meek with salvation.
5 Let the saints be joyful in glory:
Let them sing aloud upon their beds.
6 *Let* the high *praises* of God *be* in their mouth,

denote Israel, which had had fresh experience of Jehovah's loving-kindness. Cp. cxlv. 10; cxlviii. 14.

2. Jehovah is Israel's **Maker** (xcv. 6; c. 3; Is. xl.v. 2; li. 13), for to Him it owes its original existence as a nation, and the present restoration of its national life; now that it has no earthly king, it acknowledges Him as its true King as in days of old (1 Sam. viii. 7; xii. 12), and celebrates the glory of His kingdom, which is universal (cxlv. 1, 11, 12, 13), yet in an especial sense has its seat in Zion (Is. lii. 7).

3. *in the dance*] This, and not *pipe* (A.V. marg.), is the right rendering here and in cl. 4. Dancing was a natural expression of joy among the Jews as among other nations of antiquity, in all periods of their history, on occasions of religious as well as secular festivity. Cp. Ex. xv. 20; Judg. xi. 34; 2 Sam. vi. 14; Jer. xxxi. 4; and for a description of the torch-dance, which formed part of the festivities of the Feast of Tabernacles in the later post-exilic period, see Delitzsch in the *Expositor*, 1886 (2), pp. 81 ff.; Hastings' *Dict. of Bible*, I. 550. Even the leading men of the city and famous teachers joined in it, and it was a current proverb that he who had not seen this joy had not seen any joy in his life.

timbrel] The tambourine, or hand drum, frequently mentioned in connexion with dances and processions (lxviii. 25).

4. *taketh pleasure in his people*] The deliverance which they have experienced is the proof of the renewal of His favour. Cp. cxlvii. 11; Is. liv. 7, 8; lx. 10.

he **adorneth** *the meek with salvation*] Through humiliation Israel has learnt humility; and now Jehovah restores their prosperity. *Beautify* or **adorn** is a word frequently used of the restoration of Israel in the later chapters of Isaiah (lv. 5; lx. 7, 9, 13, A.V. *glorify* or *beautify*). *Salvation* is not to be limited to *victory* (R.V. marg.), but denotes welfare and prosperity generally.

5. *Let* **the beloved exult in** *glory*] Let Israel triumph in the honour thus restored to them. Perhaps *glory* as in lxxxv. 9 may include the thought of the renewed manifestation of Jehovah's Presence among His people.

upon their beds] "Songs in the night" take the place of tears and sorrow (iv. 4; vi. 6). They can lie down in peace without the fear of being roused to repel a sudden assault (**Neh. iv. 23**).

6. *high* praises] Cp. lxvi. 17, note.

And a twoedged sword in their hand;
To execute vengeance upon the heathen, 7
And punishments upon the people;
To bind their kings with chains, 8
And their nobles with fetters of iron;
To execute upon them the judgment written: 9
This honour have all his saints.
Praise ye the LORD.

in their mouth] Lit. *throat* (cxv. 7).

a twoedged sword] So the LXX and Jer.; cp. Judg. iii. 16: but *a sword of mouths* means rather *a devouring sword*. So Nehemiah's builders prayed (iv. 9) and built with sword in hand (iv. 16 ff.); and Judas Maccabaeus and his followers joined battle with Nicanor, "contending with their hands, and praying unto God with their hearts" (2 Macc. xv. 26, 27).

7. *vengeance upon the* **nations**] Cp. Is. lxi. 2; lxiii. 4.

punishments upon the **peoples**] Lit. *corrections*.

8. The subjection and homage of the nations to Israel are repeatedly anticipated in the later chapters of Isaiah (xlv. 14; xlix. 7, 23; lx. 3 ff.). In Ps. ii the Messianic king, here the Messianic people, subjugates the nations.

their nobles] **Their honourable men**, as Is. xxiii. 8, 9; Nah. iii. 10.

9. *upon them*] The nations; not the kings and nobles only.

the judgment written] The sentence pronounced by Jehovah and recorded in His book (cp. Is. lxv. 6; x. 1; Job xiii. 26) for execution at the proper time; or the reference may be to the general testimony of law and prophets concerning the ultimate judgement of the nations. See Deut. xxxii. 41 ff.; Is. xli. 15 f.; Ezek. xxxviii, xxxix; Joel iii. 12 ff.; Mic. iv. 13; Zech. xiv; &c.

this honour &c.] **Honour shall that be for all his beloved**. The defeat of their enemies brings honour to Jehovah's chosen people. It is possible to render *He is the honour of all his beloved*, but this fits the context less well.

The LXX is probably right in omitting the final *Hallelujah*.

PSALM CL.

The Book of Praises fitly ends with this full-toned call to universal praise with every accompaniment of jubilant rejoicing. It may have been composed as a closing doxology for the whole Psalter, corresponding to the doxologies at the end of the first four books; but it would seem rather to have been intended primarily, like the other Psalms of this group, for liturgical use, and to have been placed at the end of the Psalter on account of its inherent fitness.

"This noble close of the Psalter rings out one clear note of praise, as

the end of all the many moods and experiences recorded in its wonderful sighs and songs. Tears, groans, wailings for sin, meditations on the dark depths of Providence, fainting faith and foiled aspirations, all lead up to this. The Psalm is more than an artistic close of the Psalter: it is a prophecy of the last result of the devout life, and in its unclouded sunniness as well as in its universality, it proclaims the certain end of the weary years for the individual and the world. 'Everything that hath breath' shall yet praise Jehovah" (Maclaren).

150 Praise ye the LORD.
Praise God in his sanctuary:
Praise him in the firmament of his power.
2 Praise him for his mighty acts:
Praise him according to his excellent greatness.
3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet:
Praise him with the psaltery and harp.

1. *God*] El, the God of sovereign power (xc. 2).

in his sanctuary] This may mean the temple (cp. lxiii. 2, &c.), and the verse will then be a call to men to praise Jehovah in His earthly abode, and to angels to praise Him in heaven above. Cp. Ps. cxlviii. But it is better to understand it to mean heaven (cp. xi. 4). The whole verse will then be a *Sursum Corda*. Praise the holy God who dwells in His holy heaven (xx. 6), the firmament which is His handiwork and the witness to His omnipotence. This, and not *in his strong* or *indestructible firmament* (ἐν τῷ στερεώματι τῷ ἀκαθαιρέτῳ αὐτοῦ Symm.), seems to be the meaning of *the firmament of his power*. The P.B.V. *in his holiness* is in itself possible, but contrary to the parallelism.

2. *for his mighty acts*] Cp. cvi. 2; cxlv. 4, 11, 12.

according to the abundance of his greatness] Cp. 1 Chron. xxix. 11, "Thine is the greatness and the might."

3. *with the sound of the trumpet*] With blast of cornet. The 'cornet,' originally a ram's or cow's horn, perhaps in later times a metal instrument of the same shape, was mainly employed for secular purposes, while the instrument generally used in religious ceremonies was the *chatsōtserāh* or straight metal trumpet. Cp. however xlvii. 5; lxxxi. 3; xcviii. 6. It was ordinarily the work of the priests to blow the trumpet (1 Chron. xv. 24; Neh. xii. 35, 41; and often); Levites are often described as playing psalteries and harps and cymbals (1 Chron. xxv. 1, 6; Neh. xii. 27); tambourines were beaten by women as they danced (lxviii. 25); the terms used for stringed instruments and pipes are not elsewhere connected with religious ceremonies. Thus the call to praise is addressed to priests, Levites, and people; and every kind of instrument is to be enlisted in the service.

psaltery and harp] Or, *harp and lyre*. The *nēbhel* and the *kinnōr* were both stringed instruments, but the precise distinction between them is unknown. There are some reasons for thinking that the *nēbhel*

Praise him with the timbrel and dance:
Praise him with stringed instruments and organs.
Praise him upon the loud cymbals:
Praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.
Let every *thing that hath* breath praise the LORD.
Praise ye the LORD.

(A.V. *psaltery* in the Historical Books and Psalms[1], *viol* in the Prophets) was the larger and more elaborate instrument. See Driver's *Joel and Amos*, p. 234; and for illustrations of ancient lyres and harps, see Stainer, *Music of the Bible*, Chaps. i, ii.

4. *with the timbrel and dance*] See on cxlix. 3. The P.B.V. *cymbals* seems to be a slip of Coverdale's, which was not corrected in the Great Bible, as he renders *tōph* correctly by *tabret*, i.e. a small drum, in cxlix. 3.

with stringed instruments and **pipes**] The word *minnīm*, 'stringed instruments,' occurs in xlv. 8 (R.V.): the *'ugābh*, mentioned in Gen. iv. 21; Job xxi. 12, xxx. 31, was probably the *syrinx* or *Pan's-pipes*, a wind instrument consisting of a collection of reeds or pipes. See Stainer, *Music of the Bible*, Ch. vi. The two terms may include string and wind instruments generally, as "harp and pipe" in Gen. iv. 21; and as the words are not elsewhere used in connexion with religious ceremonies, they may be meant to suggest that all instruments, secular as well as sacred, should be enlisted in this service of praise. The A.V. *organs* follows the LXX and Vulg.

5. *the loud cymbals ..the high sounding cymbals*] **The clear sounding cymbals.. the clanging cymbals.** Two kinds of cymbals are obviously meant: the first, lit. *cymbals of hearing*, may have been a smaller kind, producing a sharp, clear sound, possibly *castanets*: the second may have been a larger kind, producing a clanging, booming sound. "The Arabs have two distinct varieties, large and small.... They use their large cymbals in religious ceremonies, but the smaller kind seem to be almost limited to the accompaniment of dancers." Stainer, p. 137. For *cymbals* of hearing cp. 1 Chr. xv. 19, "with cymbals of bronze, to sound aloud," lit. *to cause to hear*; xvi. 5, "Asaph with cymbals, sounding aloud," lit. *causing to hear*. With the Sept. of the second phrase, ἐν κυμβάλοις ἀλαλαγμοῦ, cp. κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον 'a clanging cymbal' (1 Cor. xiii. 1).

6. *every* thing that hath *breath*] Heb. *all breath*, Vulg. *omnis spiritus*, Jer. *omne quod spirat*. Cp. Deut. xx. 16, Josh. x. 40. *Neshāmāh* most commonly denotes the breath of man; but it may include all animals. Not priests and Levites only but all Israel, not Israel only but all mankind, not all mankind only but every living thing, must

[1] These books were in the hands of the Westminster and Cambridge companies, and the Westminster company consisted mainly of Cambridge scholars, while the Prophets were in the hands of an Oxford company. In the Apocrypha also, which was revised by a Cambridge company, *psaltery* is used, but not *viol*.

join in the chorus of praise. The universe is Jehovah's Temple, and all its inhabitants should be His worshippers.

The Psalmist's words find their echo in the vision of the Apocalypse:

"Every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying,

"Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever."

HALLELUJAH.

APPENDIX.

Note I.

On the word Chāsid.

The word *chā sīd* is characteristic of the Psalter, in which it is found 25 times. Elsewhere it occurs only in Deut. xxxiii. 8; 1 Sam. ii. 9; Prov. ii. 8; Jer. iii. 12; Mic. vii. 2. (2 Sam. xxii. 26, and 2 Chr. vi. 41 are of course not independent passages.) It is variously rendered in A.V., 'godly,' 'merciful,' or, after the Sept. ὅσιος, Vulg. *sanctus*, 'holy,' 'saints.' Its exact meaning, however, is disputed. Is it (1) active, denoting the character of the man who practises dutiful love (*chesed*) to God and to his fellow-men (A.V. and R.V. 'godly' or 'merciful'): or (2) passive, denoting the state of one who is the object of God's loving kindness (R.V. marg., 'one that He favoureth:' cp. A.V. marg. to lxxxv. 2)? The form of the word is not decisive between the two senses, and the appeal must be made to the usage of the word. In favour of (1) it is urged that the word certainly has an active sense in cxlv. 17 and Jer. iii. 12, where it is applied to God: and also in Ps. xii. 1; xviii. 25; xliii. 1; Mic. vii. 2; where it is used of the quality of lovingkindness between man and man.

On the other hand in favour of (2) it may be urged that the substantive *chesed* from which the adjective *chāsīd* is derived denotes in the Psalter almost without exception God's lovingkindness to man. It occurs there 127 times, and in three cases only is it used of man's love to man (cix. 12, 16; cxix. 8), though this sense is common elsewhere. It is never used in the Psalter of man's love to God, and indeed it is doubtful whether it is really so used at all. The passages generally quoted (Hos. vi. 4, 6; Jer. ii. 2) are not decisive.

If the primary meaning of *chāsīd* is to be governed (as seems reasonable) by that of *chesed* in the Psalms, it must certainly mean 'one who is the object of Jehovah's lovingkindness.' And this sense suits the predominant usage of the word best. It is used 15 times with a pronoun to express the relation of the covenant people, or individuals in it, to Jehovah (My, Thy, His *chasīdīm*), in connexions where the position into which they have been brought by Jehovah's grace is a more appropriate thought than that of their response to that grace either by love to God or love to their fellow-men. It is not man's love to God or to his fellow-man which is pleaded as the ground of acceptance or urged as the motive for duty, but the fact that Jehovah by His free lovingkindness has brought the nation and its members into covenant with Himself. In its primary sense then the word implies no moral praise or merit; but it

came, not unnaturally, to be connected with the idea of *chesed* as 'loving-kindness' between man and man, and to be one of the characters which reflected the love of which it was itself the object; and finally was applied even to God Himself.

Note II.

On the Title 'Most High.'

The usage of the title 'Most High' (*Elyon*) should be carefully examined.

(1) As used by non-Israelites, it appears as the designation of the Supreme God in the mouth of the Canaanite priest-king Melchisedek (Gen. xiv. 18—22); it is employed by Balaam (Num. xxiv. 16); it is put into the mouth of the presumptuous king of Babylon (Is. xiv. 14).

(2) Its application to Jehovah from the Israelite standpoint is limited to poetry. It occurs in Deut. xxxii. 8 (note the connexion with the partition of the earth among the *nations*); Lam. iii. 35, 38; and 21 times in the Psalter [and in 2 Sam. xxii. 14 = Ps. xviii. 13], always, with one exception (cvii. 11), in the first four books. It is nowhere found in the Prophets.

(3) In the Aramaic of the Book of Daniel it occurs, in one peculiar passage (vii. 18—27) in the plural of majesty; and a synonymous word is used frequently, but, with one exception (vii. 25), in the mouth of Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar, or in words addressed to them. It is used several times by the author of Ecclesiasticus, but still more frequently by his Greek translator, who employs it (ὕψιστος, without the article) not only for *Elyon*, but for *Jehovah*, *El*, and other names of God. It occurs also in 2 Macc. iii. 31.

Note III.

On the Hebrew Tenses.

The English reader may be at a loss to understand how it can so often be doubtful whether a verb should be rendered by the past or the future tense. The uncertainty arises from the peculiar character of the Hebrew Tenses, which denote *mode* of action rather than *time* of action. The fundamental idea of the 'perfect' (sometimes called the 'past') is *completed* action: the fundamental idea of the 'imperfect' (sometimes called the 'future') is *incomplete* action.

In simple narrative prose the 'perfect' usually refers to the past, and the 'imperfect' to the future. But in the higher styles of poetry and prophecy both tenses are used with much greater freedom.

(1) A future event may be regarded as having already taken place, either in order that it may be more forcibly presented to the mind, or because it is contemplated as being absolutely certain to happen; and in such cases the perfect tense, sometimes called the 'perfect of certainty,' or 'prophetic perfect,' is used. See Ps. xxii. 29; xxxvii. 20.

(2) A past event may be regarded, for the sake of vivid description, as being still in progress, and the 'imperfect' tense may be employed with reference to it. Thus in Ps. vii. 15, 'the ditch *he was making*' (imperf.) represents the wicked man as still engaged upon his plot when it proves his own ruin. This usage corresponds to the 'historic present,' and is very common in poetry.

The 'imperfect' is also used as a frequentative, of repeated action, and to express general truths.

Hence it is often doubtful, as in numerous instances in Ps. xviii, whether a Hebrew imperfect refers to the past or the future, and should be rendered by past, present, or future. The decision must be regulated by the context and the general view taken of the sense of the passage. Not seldom the peculiar force of the Hebrew tenses cannot be expressed in an English translation without awkward circumlocutions.

Note IV.

On xi. 1.

There are two readings here: the Qrê, *flee thou* (fem.): the Kthîbh, *flee ye*. If *flee thou* is addressed, as it is natural to suppose, to David's soul, it must be explained as a bold combination of direct and indirect speech, equivalent to 'that she should flee as a bird to your mountain,' i.e. join you in your mountain retreat. Or David and his adherents may be addressed. 'Flee, O birds (fem. collective), to your mountain!' The second reading, 'flee ye, like birds (or, ye birds), to your mountain,' is simpler. David and his companions are exhorted to seek the mountain which is their natural or accustomed place of refuge. But it must be admitted that the plural 'flee ye' is harsh, and that we should expect the poet's soul to be addressed; while at the same time if the singular 'flee thou' is read, the plural 'your mountain' can only be explained by the assumption of a bold construction, or an abrupt transition from sing. to plur. And when we find that all the ancient versions give the verb in the singular, and none of them express *your*, it becomes almost certain that by a very slight change of text we should read 'Flee (thou) as a bird to the mountain.' (נודי הר כמו צפור).

Note V.

On lxxxiii. 1.

The puzzling Latin heading in the P. B., *Deus, quis similis?* is the Vulg. rendering of the LXX. mistranslation, *ὁ θεός, τίς ὁμοιωθήσεταί σοι; Deus, quis simulis erit tibi?* The Heb. root DMH means *to be like* as well as *to cease*.

NEW TESTAMENT QUOTATIONS FROM THE PSALMS.

Psalm ii. 1, 2	quoted	Acts iv. 25, 26.
7	,,	Acts xiii. 33; Heb. i. 5; v. 5.
8, 9	,,	Rev. ii. 26, 27; xii. 5; xix. 15.
iv. 4	,,	Eph. iv. 26.
v. 9	,,	Rom. iii. 13.
vi. 3 *a*	,,	John xii. 27.
8	,,	Matt. vii. 23; Lk. xiii. 27.
viii. 2	,,	Matt. xxi. 16.
4—6	,,	Heb. ii. 6—8.
6	,,	1 Cor. xv. 27; Eph. i. 22.
x. 7	,,	Rom. iii. 14.
xiv. 1 *c*, 2 *b*, 3	,,	Rom. iii. 10—12.
xvi. 8—11	,,	Acts ii. 25—28.
10 *b*	,,	Acts xiii. 35.
xviii. 2 *b*	,,	Heb. ii. 13.
49	,,	Rom. xv. 9.
xix. 4	,,	Rom. x. 18.
xxii. 1	,,	Matt. xxvii. 46; Mk. xv. 34.
7	,,	Matt. xxvii. 39; Mk. xv. 29; Lk. xxiii. 35.
8	,,	Matt. xxvii. 43.
18	,,	John xix. 24; cp. Matt. xxvii. 35; Mk. xv. 24; Lk. xxiii. 34.
22	,,	Heb. ii. 12.
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13	,,	Lk. i. 68.
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This list includes a few passages which are not formally introduced as quotations, though they are taken directly from the Psalms: but it does not attempt to collect the numerous indirect allusions and references to the thought and language of the Psalms which are to be found in the New Testament, and which are interesting and important as an indication of the writers' familiarity with the Psalter. See Note A in Archbishop Alexander's *Bampton Lectures*, pp. 291 ff.

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